Of Monsters and Men

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Of Monsters and Men

by PossessiveNoun

Summary

For Will's whole life, he had been carrying a secret with him, a dark secret, a dangerous secret. He was born Incubus, raised to take the lives of men and women to sate himself and now, as an adult, he sought redemption by becoming a lecturer in criminal profiling for the FBI. His killing days are long behind him, his instincts kept in check by rigid self control.

But his carefully ordered life comes crashing down around him when he meets the psychiatrist, Dr Hannibal Lecter. He's something *Other* too, and their natures draw them together like magnets. If it was up to Will, they wouldn't be spending any time in each other's company but Hannibal has every intention of getting to know Will far better.

Notes

I can't believe it's been over a year since I wrote something for the Hannibal fandom. I hope this makes up for my absence?

I

Will was five years old when his father left.

He had the vague impression of large steady hands, a low baritone of a voice and the faint scent of motor oil that came from the boat motors he worked on at the marine harbour. Will had been too young to really remember much of him, but what he can remember was a cool evening in the middle of September at their home, a storm was brewing for the better part of the day. His mother had lit the old fireplace and the room soon warmed up, chasing the chill away. She had him cuddled into her lap as she sat on the sofa, running her long slim fingers through his dark curls, gently pulling at the knots until his hair lay smooth across his forehead.

His father was standing in the arch of the doorway and Will can't recall the expression on his face, but the tension between them was palpable, disrupting the easy warmth. It had a quiet sadness to it that took your breath away.

"He's just as much my son as he is yours, Catherine," he said softly. It wasn't spoken confrontationally, merely stating the undeniable truth. It hung in the air between the three of them, like a tired old argument that was weighed down with a lifetime of emotion.

Catherine's fingers stopped their combing, the grip tightening until Will winced and made a noise of pained discomfort. Her hold instantly loosened and she petted him until he lay still against her again. She began to hum a song she always sung to him at night time, and she began to rock him in her arms.

Catherine didn't reply to her husband, didn't even turn her head to acknowledge his presence or that he spoke to her at all. All her attention was on her son, had been from the moment she had given birth to him. Her husband had faded into the background, like an unwelcome distraction.

An unwelcome intruder on their familial bliss.

After a while, he melted away to destinations unknown, like he had never been there at all.

A week later, Catherine had told Will that they were now a family of two, that his father won't be coming home anymore. Will remembered crying at the loss, not really understanding what that really meant. Catherine had wiped his tears from his cheeks, all the while cooing and smiling at him.

For Will, attending school had been one long nightmare after another. At eight years old, he looked just like any other boy his age. Dark hair that often curled messily in his eyes, a little on the small side compared to his peers perhaps, but he wasn't the smallest boy in his class. Neither was he too dumb or too clever, too loud or to quiet. He made sure not to paint a target on his back for the bullies, but despite this, the other children drew away from him. They treated him like he was a leper, even then they could sense that he was different from the rest of them and they hated him for it.

One kid in particular, Davey Tanner, made it his mission in life to make Will's own as miserable as he could. He spat spit balls in Will's hair, emptied the school's bins in Will's backpack, pushed him over in the playground amidst the jeers of their classmates and yanked Will's school blazer until the stitching gave and the seams ripped open.

It wasn't what they all did to Will that upset him the most; it was how they made him feel. Useless, weak, pathetic. *Alien.*

Catherine had been angry about his ruined blazer, had knelt down in front of him and made him look her in the eye. She asked him how it had happened in that lilting voice of hers and he was powerless against her. He could never lie to her, not when she used *that* voice and looked at him like *that*, his omission came tumbling from his lips, the words practically tripping over each other to be heard. He couldn't stop once he had started.

When he finally quietened, she had calmed and, to Will, that calm had been worse than the anger. She promised him a new blazer, *don't you worry* , all of his troubles with little Davey

Tanner will soon be over. Will went to his bedroom with the feeling of trepidation twisting up his insides until it felt like knots.

After school the next day, Catherine had met Will at the gates like the rest of the parents did with their children. She wore a simple yellow sundress and a tight white cropped cardigan. Her long dark hair was twisted up into a silver clip that kept it off of her shoulders and neck. The other parents, both men and women, were staring at her, utterly transfixed. When she smiled as Will approached, she was radiant.

His mother was a beautiful woman, he had always known that. But as she stood there in the light of the early summer sun, he saw what others saw and his footsteps faltered.

She laughed at him kindly, the sound was rich and pleasant and he wanted to hear it again and again. She pulled him to her in a generous hug and Will didn't hesitate to put his arms around her waist. She smelt like the best of summer.

Just like that, she was his mother again and Will had to shake his head to dispel the daze.

She pulled away but kept him close to her, smiling down at him as she peered into his face. "Now, point out the boy who has been hurting you."

Her face didn't change, but he felt stone cold at her words. His heart beat kicked up and dread settled into his bones. "Mama, please-"

"Will," she said in a light teasing tone that made Will's blood turn to ice in his veins. "Show me."

And he did. Davey was standing with his father at the gate, the boy enthusiastically showing the man something in his exercise book, something he was obviously proud of, and speaking a mile a minute. But his father was looking at the exercise book, he was looking at Catherine and not being subtle about it.

Catherine turned that charming smile on to the father and Will knew without a shadow of a doubt that the man didn't stand a chance against her. After all, she was born to make people want her.

Catherine made her way over to the two, Will trailing reluctantly behind her.

Davey finally noticed that he didn't have his father's attention and followed the line of the man's eyes to see them approaching. His face contorted into a disgusted sneer at the sight of Will and Will wanted to turn around and go home so badly.

But he couldn't. Catherine had to punish and there would be no dissuading her from it.

Will doesn't remember what was said between Catherine and Davey's father, he doubt he caught any of the conversation in the first place, but it wasn't long before Catherine had persuaded him and Davey to take a walk with them to the local park a few streets over.

Will knew Davey's parents were still married, had seen the mother come to collect Davey from school often enough, but by the elated look on his father's face, he appeared to have forgotten his wife entirely.

As Davey ran ahead of them, sullen at this new change of plans, Will shuffled behind the couple, watching as Catherine linked her arm with the father, his other hand coming to rest over her smaller one, his thumb stroking the skin he could reach. He was well and truly snared by her.

At the park, Davey left them without a glance back at them to go climb the monkey bars with the other kids and Will was left to sit on a park bench with his backpack clenched to his side. Catherine glanced over her shoulder, her eyes telling him everything without having to use words, before she drew the besotted father to the secluded leafy line of a crop of low hanging trees, disappearing from view from any onlookers.

Stay put until I get back, do not raise any alarm, wait for me.

Will pulled out a book from his backpack and laid it open in his lap as if he was reading, but his eyes stayed fixed on the page without taking in any of the typed words.

The park was peaceful save for the excited shouts of the children as they called to each other on the swings or the slide. A young couple was out walking their dog, a lone runner with his earbuds in as he wound his way along the cement path. Davey was completely unconcerned with the whereabouts of his father, instead elbowing another kid out of the way to take their place on the roundabout.

It was like any other afternoon at the park.

Will couldn't be sure how long it was before Catherine came gliding out of the treeline. It could have been mere minutes of even hours. Anxiety had a tendency to make time stretch out to a slow crawl. But when she did appear, she was on her own with Davey's father anywhere in sight.

She was looking like her skin was glowing from the inside out, like she had swallowed light, more beautiful than ever. It hurt to look at her. She held her hand out to Will and Will took it. They left the park at a leisurely stroll, enjoying the sunshine and the soft warm breeze. Unable to help himself, he risked one look back at Davey as he was swinging back and forth on the big swings, legs kicking in the air as he tried to touch the sky with his sneakers.

Years later, Will wondered how long Davey had been at the park until the cold creeping touch of concern encroached on his playtime before he went in search of his father. Had it been that little angry boy that had found his father's body? Or was it the couple with the dog that stumbled upon it? Did Davey call the police or did his mother, tired of waiting for her boys to be home, tracing them to the park and call the police with a crying Davey in her arms?

Will wouldn't know the answers to any of these questions. The next day, Catherine had their life packed up in a number of suitcases and across state lines before anyone thought to look for the beautiful woman in the yellow sundress and her son.

They never stayed long in one place at any given time, a couple months in the hills of Montana, a year in the city of Michigan. Places with a bigger population always meant a longer stay, they could blend in easier, people went missing all the time is cities like that, less questions, less mess. Catherine was always careful with who she picked. It was never anyone who could be associated with the Graham's and she didn't glut herself either. She considered it wasteful, a risk too many for things like them.

"You take too many of them at one time and they are bound to notice something is wrong," she told Will as they sat in a red vinyl booth at a roadside diner. A cup of sweetened coffee sat in front of Catherine and a cheeseburger and coke for Will. Country music was playing in the background, an otherwise mild annoyance judging by the little crease between her eyebrows. "They breed like cockroaches but when a few go missing in a short period of time, they get nervous and then they get violent. It's what drives their whole speeches. Fear."

She picked up a paper napkin from the metal dispenser next to the various condiments and dabbed gently at the ketchup smear on Will's face with an indulgent look. "Only take what you need, sweetheart. Sate the hunger in you and move on. Don't give in to the desire like some of us are prone to do. If you give in, then we are nothing more than base animals."

Will often wondered what other mothers would teach their sons. Perhaps they would teach them how to ride a bike without the stabilisers on, to say 'please' and 'thank you', to help them with their mathematics homework and to not except sweets from strangers. They would soothe their son's scraped knees from falling off of their skateboards, educate them on not to hide behind the pathetic epithet of 'boys will be boys' and treat girls (mother's especially) with respect. As the sons grow older, how to live independently and not rely on their parent's bank account, how to set up house and cook for themselves.

Catherine wasn't like other mothers, though. Will wasn't like other sons. Instead, Catherine taught Will the roles of predator and prey, how to blend in with the crowd and how to stand out when it was advantageous to them. How to hunt and how to hide and how to get rid of the 'evidence'.

"Of course, you're still young," she said, patting his hand as she sat back in her seat. "All this won't make much sense to you until the time it does. And when that happens, it will come naturally as breathing. You'll see."

Will could only nod and trust in her confidence. He had no one else anyway.

Catherine had been right. Will was fourteen years old when he went through puberty and, ultimately, the change that happens to their kind.

It felt like he was burning from the inside out, burning up, his insides turning to nothing but smoking ash. Every one of his limbs ached fiercely, his skin becoming so sensitized that it hurt too much to wear his clothes. Light stabbed his eyes like razor sharp needles, made his head throb like his brain was swelling and it was about to explode. He couldn't keep any food down and water simply made it easier to throw up anything that was in his loudly protesting stomach.

But he was so hungry.

Catherine had locked him in his bedroom (Toms River, New Jersey. One of the better places they had stayed). The curtains had been drawn shut, the bed stripped to the bare mattress and anything that could be made into a weapon was removed entirely. She came in once or twice a day to bring him water and to check on his progress but otherwise she stayed away. Even when he screamed and screamed until his throat was raw and bloody, she did not go to him. He wreathed and whimpered in the darkness, body drenched from his sweat and fingers raw from tearing at the mattress.

Will couldn't say for certain how long it took to finish the change. Days and nights blended together to form one long nightmare of half remembered agony and euphoria. But when he did finally come to, it was on the floor of his bedroom with his head resting in Catherine's lap and peering up at her smiling face.

She was brushing his hair away from his sweaty forehead with loving fingers. "My sweet beautiful boy, everything is alright now. The pain is going."

Will blinked up at her, dazed and exhausted, but mercifully without the pain or that abominable heat torching his veins. He licked his cracked dry lips and tried to speak, but no sound came out. His throat was still too raw to properly make sound.

Catherine's smile widened and she slowly stood up, drawing him up with her on shaky legs. "Come, let me show you what you've become."

They left the confines of his bedroom, Will's eyes still sensitive to the light but it was manageable if he squinted. She pulled him down the corridor to the bathroom and stood him in front of the cabinet mirror, her hand on his shoulders to steady him as he took in his own reflection.

The person staring back at him was a complete stranger. What used to be dark unruly tangled curls were now glossy thick hair. His skin was blemish free, pale and flawless. The eyes that took it all in were dark green and magnetic. *Unnatural.* His thin lips had filled out, now plump and pouting. His body was thin and toned, like a swimmer's physique.

Catherine hooked her chin over his shoulder and cuddled him to her. "You are so beautiful. There can be no one who could resist your lure, my little incubus." She kissed him on the cheek and held him tighter, anchoring him to Earth when he felt like he would float away.

The first time he killed a thrall, it had been terribly messy.

Catherine had helped lure the man in with her smile and experience, showing Will how to capture their attention with a single glance. The succubi and incubi lure was simple. They used beauty as a net, drawing their intended target in and snaring them with the promise of pleasure. Humans were base creatures, it was instinctual for the man to leave the bar with the pretty brunette and follow her into the service alley where she wrapped her arms around his neck in an imitation of a lover's embrace, standing on her tiptoes and kissing him. It was the most exquisite kiss of his life, he was practically drunk on it.

Catherine pulled away, licking her lips as she chased the residue of energy from the man. She turned her head and smiled at Will who had been in the alley the whole time, watching and waiting with gnawing hunger.

“Simple,” she explained. “Now you try.”

The man, still dazed, wasn’t phased by the appearance of Will, only giving a slow blink as Catherine pulled away fully and Will took her place. He captured the man’s gaze and held it, and in return the man was helpless in his arms. Eager for Will. Desperate.

The first taste of the man’s energy was like the first sip of water to a man dying of thirst. Will moaned and gripped the man tighter to him, pulling the energy in faster and faster until Will’s whole body was lit up with it. He couldn’t stop, couldn’t think of a single reason why he should stop.

Catherine’s delighted laugh pulled him back to himself and, even with the close proximity to the man’s face, Will could see he was very much dead.

Will flinched, dropping the body to the ground in his shock. The man lay there, eyes open and milky, the skin as dry as old papyrus paper with a sickly grey pallor. He looked like a husk of a man, having been dead far longer than mere moments.

Will had sucked the very life out of him.

Catherine’s arms came around him and he couldn’t muster the energy to hug her back. He couldn’t tear his eyes away from the man- no, the corpse.

“Grizzly, isn’t it?” She hummed. “You’ll get used to it. With more practise, you’ll be able to do it all by yourself. We can hunt together, you and I. We won’t ever go hungry.”

“Yes, mamma,” Will murmured. It terrified him to think of doing this to someone else. Terrified him, but it didn’t stop him. Hunger was a singular torment and they had to eat.

At seventeen years old, everything changed.

They had been hunting together for two years now, across what seemed like all the states of America and the names and faces of the dead felt like an endless procession behind his eyelids. A macabre film slide that never left him alone, never gave him a real moment of peace.

Will isn’t sure if he really deserved that peace.

He wasn’t old enough to be at a bar or to legally drink, but that didn’t stop him from being allowed to sit with the rest of the punters nursing a diet coke or a water. All he had to do was tilt his head slightly to the side, peer up at the bar staff through his long lashes and they would agree to anything. If Catherine laughed that laugh that she had, it would be a non-issue for everyone there.

Catherine had picked out a young woman in her thirties, with a dark blonde bob and a mouth that had laughter lines at the creases. Though she wasn’t smiling now. Her long term boyfriend had broken up with her yet again, this time in favour of a redhead who was still in high school. She was steadily making her way through the list of cocktails on the drinks menu, and getting pleasantly buzzed to numb the humiliation.

Catherine had been the one to approach her and the woman had lit up like the fourth of July with the attention. She patted the empty seat next to her and Catherine had gladly sat down. While Catherine gave her drinks order to the bartender, the blonde glanced around the bar, her gaze slipping over the punters before they rested on Will at the end of the bar and then stayed on him.

He smiled invitingly and she returned it with a flush to her cheeks.

Catherine caught the exchange and Will would never forget the look that came over her features. It was feral and vicious and Will had never seen her look like that before, certainly not at him. In the next moment, her face was wiped clean and Catherine turned back to the blonde, placing her hand on her arm and drawing her attention back to where it belonged.

It left Will shaken, unsure for the first time since they had started hunting together. Catherine had been jealous of the attention the blonde had paid him, *her mark,* covetous of the energy she deemed hers. When Catherine and the blonder left the bar, Will didn't follow. He couldn't be sure that, if he had followed like they had originally planned, she would not have turned on him, struck him down for the presumption of being allowed to feed.

So he stayed in his spot by the bar, nursed his drink and ignored the looks of invitation thrown his way, and waited. After a while, Catherine appeared again by his side, flushed and happy and acting like nothing had changed.

There was no mention of Will's missed meal, no mention of hunting for himself. They simply went home and Will silently took it as a form of punishment.

What Will didn't know for sure until the very end was things like them were solitary hunters for a very good reason. They couldn't take the competition of another for their food source, the competition for the attention and admiration. Like the energy, they feed off of it, yearn to be needed by a human. Not even another family member would be tolerated, perhaps less so. It went against every one of their instincts until the warning couldn't be drowned out by maternal love.

It had been fine when Will was new-born and still learning. Catherine always took the lead and showed him how it was done. Will had to rely on her knowledge, her experience. It made her the better hunter, getting the lion's share of the energy.

But now Will was coming into his own, growing into his new body and becoming less reliant on her with every feeding. Their victims were responding more to him with each passing day and Catherine was becoming more aware of the lure of her son. Their bond had been strong but the natural instinct of a succubi was stronger and it overrode everything else. Survival often overrode everything.

They hunted together less and less, Catherine leaving their house for no more than a night before it turned into two and then three. They talked less, sometimes not at all and their home life became something that Will dreaded coming back to.

Until one night, Will came home from his studies at a local college to find Catherine and her belongings gone. He stood in the middle of her bedroom, peering into the empty confines of her wardrobe and drawers and feeling numb. She left no note, but then she didn't need to.

If she had stayed with him, she would have hurt him, perhaps have even killed him. She loved her son too much to do that so she did the one thing that would save them both.

From eighteen years of age, Will was alone for the first time.

With Catherine and her influence gone, Will soon lost all taste for the kill. As more faces joined the endless procession of his victims behind his closed eyelids, he couldn't stomach the hunt anymore. Couldn't bear to think who they were leaving behind them, like a trail of tears.

So he learnt to 'skim' off of the people around him, take a little of their energy here and there. Not enough to do any real harm, perhaps they felt a little tired at the end of the day, like they hadn't gotten a full night's rest, but that was it. It was enough to sustain him, keep the creeping hunger at bar, but never enough to fully satisfy him.

It was worth it.

Trying to be normal became Will's obsession. In his twenties now, he wore clear glass glasses to hide behind, grew out his stubble and wore neutral tone baggy clothes to downplay his looks. Rarely did he use his lure, it tended to only appear when Will was almost starving (a survival mechanism, perhaps), but as long as Will skimmed the energy, he was fine. *Fine.* He

went back to school, scored well in his exams and went on to study at the University of Baltimore, getting a undergraduates degree in criminal law, his masters following soon after.

It was perhaps a macabre choice to decide on criminal law, considering his past, but he couldn't help himself. There was a vain part in him that wanted to somehow make up for what he had done, to stop others from doing it to other people.

He stalled about two years into working in the homicide division, his psyche evaluations made him unsuited for fieldwork. Chasing serial killers, getting inside of their minds to figure out their next move so Jack Crawford could apprehend them, had set his very mind on fire. His brain wasn't the same as most humans, his way of thinking could be explained by psyche tests as being on the spectrum of people with Asperger's and sociopathy.

And really, Will was okay with that. Better to have your wagon hitched to the autistic spectrum than have them guess at the real reason.

So they moved him to a new role, one where they could still benefit from his useful insights, but not be burdened by such things as federal practise laws. Will became a lecturer at Baltimore state university on serial killer methods and cases.

For Will, it had been enough. More than enough. When he was fiscally stable, he bought a place out in Wolf Trap. It needed some improvement, the wood of the wrap around porch had warped and rotted in some places, the plumbing of the bathroom was loud and cantankerous, but it had a lot of land that would be his and he couldn't see the nearest neighbour. Further north there was even a fast flowing river where he could put his homemade fish hooks to good use.

With the new home, came a new family. He found his first, a stray Jack Russell by the name of Thumper (named after his ceaselessly wagging tail thumping anything that was in a meter radius of him at any given time). And then one soon become two and two became three and he now had six dogs in his pack. They didn't seem bothered by the fact that he didn't smell like a human and Will was glad for it. Dogs were supposed to be good judges of character, right? He hoped that meant something.

Will worked, walked his dogs, fished and slept. He kept his students at a distance, rarely had those he would generally call a friend. Alana Bloom and her girlfriend Margot were the

closest that came to that term, sharing a lunch perhaps once a week at the University, rarely a drink in the evening. It was nice to split up his days, and even nicer to not have any expectations put on him.

There were never any lovers to speak of, never had been. Having a lover meant sex and intimacy and, quite frankly, Will couldn't be sure if anyone could survive being the lover of an Incubus for very long. The hunger was insatiable and Will didn't trust his self control.

Besides, you can't miss what you never had in the first place. Will just doesn't let his thoughts wander that far.

II

Will felt the subtle change of atmosphere in the lecture hall, like ripples across the surface of a pond. He had his back to the students as he changed the reel of projected forensic photographs of the Collins family homicides (Mother, Father, two children shot in the head as they ate dinner at the table, faces in their uneaten Sunday dinner), the student's hushed murmurs and the creak of seats as they reflexively sat up straighter was like an annoying tick in his concentration. Will didn't need three guesses as to who just walked into his lecture hall.

Jack Crawford stood just inside the doorway, his intimidating frame blocking the exit like he expected Will to bolt at the sight of him. If Will even had a fool's hope of getting past the Detective, he would have done so.

Instead, Will finished up his lecture like there had been no interruption, all the while feeling Jack's burning impatient gaze on him the whole time. Will allowed himself to feel that spark of smugness at inconveniencing the man for a short while. Whatever Jack was here for, it would be more of an inconvenience to Will and they both knew it.

The students filed out one by one, some hanging back to see if they could patch a part of the conversation, before scuttling away under the ire of Jack's glare.

"Something tells me this isn't a friendly visit," Will mused as he started to pack up his desk, slipping his files into his leather shoulder bag. He kept his eyes on his hands, not wanting to give away the weariness he felt, but knowing his voice betrayed him.

"Astute, as always," Crawford returned, before raising something he had in his hands and waved it to get Will's attention. It was an FBI file, the emblem flashing in the flare of the light of the projection. "We have a new case."

"Ah," Will said, skin prickling with discomfort. "I suppose you're just going to ignore the fact that I was removed from my rank by your bosses?."

Jack shrugged, like the words could just roll of him. “We can work around that. Your insights are too valuable to be ignored.”

Will finally met Jack’s eyes with a look of consternation. “I’m pretty sure they won’t see it that way.”

Jack opened his mouth to argue, but seemed to change tactics halfway through. “Look, I know the Garrett Jacob Hobbs case was rough on you-”

Will laughed, a tight bitter sound that was almost alien to him. “Rough. My brain was on fire for knowing Hobbs, Jack. I didn’t know where he ended and I began.”

“I said I would keep you from the edge and I did,” Crawford said, sliding across the desk towards Will. “You were never alone.”

An empty hopeless reassurance, and one that Jack thought better of once they had left his mouth. “We wouldn’t have caught Hobbs if it wasn’t for you. You saved lives.”

Will huffed out a silent breath, irritated. “Don’t sell your team short, they would have caught him.”

Jack snorted derisively. “Eventually. But how many women would have been murdered before we closed the net around him?”

Will knew where this was going. He’s heard this speech a thousand times before. “I can’t help you, Jack.” He slung the strap of his bag over his shoulder, a definitive gesture of him leaving Jack and the conversation behind. “I can’t trust myself to look without losing myself entirely.”

Will made to leave but Jack’s words made him pause. “You won’t have to trust yourself. I’m sending you to a highly respected psychiatrist who I will be trusting to keep you on the right track.”

Will turned back to him, exasperation in every word. “It won’t work, I've been to dozens since working for the bureau. I know all of their tricks.”

Crawford looked less than impressed. “You mean it won’t work because you won’t let it? I need to rubber stamp you to keep you on the case, keep you on the right side of sane.”

“I’m not interested, Jack-”

“The victims are children, Will. Aged between eight and fifteen years old.”

“Jack.” Will hissed through his teeth, a sharp warning, a plea to say no more.

“Children from affluent homes, they break into the houses at night and slaughter the parents. Kidnap the children and then a week or two later the local authorities find the bodies dumped in fields, organs and body parts missing. They are not too careful about the removal, either.”

Will closed his eyes against it, pained. “Another cannibal?”

“After Garrett Jacob Hobbs hit the news, it opened up a new line of inquiry for the case.”

And just like that, Will felt all of his resolve crumble to dust. “You win, Jack. Give me tonight and I’ll see you at the office tomorrow morning.”

Will was sitting stiffly in the waiting room of Dr Hannibal Lecter, his fingers drumming out a sharp staccato rhythm on the wooden armrest of his chair.

It was the most unusual of waiting rooms he had ever been in, particularly for a psychiatrist. Or perhaps a better adjective would be singular. Where the other waiting rooms Will had seen were almost clinical in their choice of furniture and sparseness, Dr Lecter's was anything but. It was done in shades of dark green and charcoal grey, the seats belonging in a renaissance faire and, will wonders never cease, soft and comfortable. The paintings on the wall weren't the shifting splatter of coloured paint that artists are now calling art these days, but classical city skylines around the world. Will wasn't a lover of art by any stretch of the imagination, but he could tell that they must have collectively cost a small fortune.

Who the hell decorates their waiting room with expensive art and soft furnishings anyway?

He had his answer when the office door opened and out stepped Dr Lecter.

Will stood from his chair slowly to greet the man and stopped, suddenly aware with the growing sensation of sharp awareness. All the hairs on the back of Will's neck suddenly stood on end and he felt close to breathlessness.

The man known as Dr Hannibal Lecter stood in the doorway, the space taken up by the width of his shoulders. He was taller than Will by a scant few inches, but his presence felt a lot larger. He wore a dove grey suit, a maroon tie and matching pocket handkerchief in his left breast pocket. The cut of the suit was form fitting and Will didn't need three guesses that it was tailored for him.

He was a man in his late forties, with styled dark hair, darker eyes and a pleasant face. He wasn't handsome in the modern sense of the word but his features made up a striking face that would make women do a double take when they passed him.

But…

But. This man wasn't a man at all. He wasn't human. The sensation marching along his skin was the awareness that this was another creature, not incubi like Will, but something entirely

other. This could get ugly.

The look on Dr Lecter's face didn't change exactly, but the eyes darkened imperceptibly and his nostrils flared as he took a deep breath in before slowly letting it out. He sensed Will to be different too and the small smile that lifted those thin lips told Will that he was delighted with the surprise.

"Will Graham, I presume," Dr Lecter spoke, his words accented with the lilt of an eastern European. They were warm, welcoming, and no hint of aggression that he could detect.

Will swallowed with difficulty, his mouth painfully dry. He couldn't get his limbs to move, couldn't get himself to speak. Only stand there, staring like an idiot.

The Doctor didn't seem perturbed by the silence, instead stepping back from the doorway and holding out an arm in welcome. "Please, come in."

Will could see into the larger room, decorated similarly to the waiting room. There were bookshelves on the far wall, large windows and two single chairs facing each other in the middle of the space.

No.

"This was a mistake," Will said, his voice breaking embarrassingly halfway through the sentence. "I shouldn't have come here."

Dr Lecter didn't answer, just cocked his head to the side and watched him. Waiting.

This wasn't going to happen. Will took a step back, and then another before turning around and retreating, all the while feeling those eyes on the back of his neck the whole way.

It was no surprise that Will got a call from Jack that evening. Will watched Jack's name flash at him on his caller ID and had the sudden childish urge to not pick up, to let it go to answerphone and have Jack yell at him into the silence of his home.

But it would only postpone the inevitable and with a grimace, he picked it up as he sat in the chair out on the veranda, his numerous dogs milling around and sniffing the nearby vegetation. "Hello Jack."

"Will." Jack returns, his anger remarkably constrained, making his already low tenor that much deeper and ominous. "I heard from Doctor Lecter earlier this evening."

Will rubbed at his eyes beneath his glasses, almost knocking them off in the process. He felt so tired. "Ah," he said for lack of a better response.

"He told me you didn't show up to your appointment with him today," Jack reiterated. "Do you think you could trouble yourself into telling me as to why you didn't show up like we discussed?"

Will's eyebrows rose at the words. In all honesty, Will had been expecting Dr Lecter to have told Jack that Will had shown up to his office, only to have run away with his tail between his legs. He had spent the time between then and now trying to come up with plausible excuses to tell Jack that didn't make him sound like a coward or that he had a breakdown in that waiting room. The knowledge that Dr Lecter, in some small way, had covered for him now threw him off his carefully rehearsed argument and he struggled to gather his thoughts to coincide with the new information.

"I'm sorry Jack, I just… couldn't make it," Will finished lamely.

“And a phone call to the good Doctor to cancel was too much for you, was it?” Jack countered. “Tell him your reasons for wasting his and my time?”

“Jack.”

Jack sighed, the noise causing static along the phone line. “Whatever your reasons for not attending the appointment, it better not stop you from attending your new appointment that Dr Lecter was kind enough to extend to you. You meet him tomorrow at 7:30 pm. Am I making myself clear enough for you, Will?”

Will wanted to tell Jack to back off, to get another therapist to rubber stamp him, that he wasn’t willing to walk into that room again-

But he didn’t say any of those things, not to Jack. Jack, if anything, was pig headed and mulish and would have bulldozed right through all of Will’s protests like they were nothing but matchsticks. He would frog march Will right to Lecter’s very door if Will didn’t acquiesce.

“I’ll make it,” Will assured him half-heartedly.

“I’m counting on you, Will,” Jack said, just to screw in the nails of guilt. “Don’t let me down.”

Jack clicked off before Will could reply and Will stared out over his pack as they went about their business without a care in the world.

There was nothing left for it but to do as he was told.

Will arrived for his appointment almost ten minutes late, four of those minutes had been spent sitting in his car with the engine idling and battling the overwhelming urge to throw his whole life he had built in Virginia and drive until he could no longer see the state in his rear view mirror.

Just as he had contemplated it, a wave of anger washed over him. This was his home, he had a built a life here, a good life with connections and security and a home, and no other creature was going to drive him away from it, not without violence on Will's part.

That anger carried him to Dr Lecter's waiting room and to the already open door that Lecter held open for him, but the feeling soon fizzled out. Will stopped just at the threshold, eyeing the gap and the man with equal trepidation.

Hannibal must have sensed Will's hesitation because he extended his arm that was not holding the door open in a welcome gesture. "Mr Graham, Please, come in."

Really, Will had no other choice but to comply.

Will stepped into the room, all the while painfully aware of Hannibal at his back as he shut the door with an audible click. His instincts prickled with alarm at having what was clearly a predator in his blind spot but he squashed it down. Jack knew where he was and, If Hannibal was as smart as he appeared to be, he wouldn't hurt him and risk his own exposure to the FBI.

Of course, it didn't mean Will had to give the other man an open invitation though.

There were two comfortable looking chairs that were facing each other in the centre of the room. Will sat in the one that was closest to the exit without direction from Hannibal. "Jack Crawford has asked you to rubber stamp me for active duty with the FBI." He said, without looking at him. "Let's get this over and done with so we can both be on our way."

There was a pause of no movement before Hannibal walked over to the remaining chair and sat down, all graceful movement and poise that made Will feel incredibly shabby and inelegant in comparison.

Hannibal tilted his head slightly, as if considering Will's words. At length, he said, "I imagine seeing me came as a shock to you."

Will smiled humourlessly. "What gave you that impression?"

Hannibal ignored the sarcasm. "Then i am to understand from your reaction that you haven't come across Others before?"

Will heard the capital letter in the use of Others and he snorted. "There have been Others that I have come across before," he said, casting his mind back to the rare occasions he had glimpsed them. The old woman in the bright paisley printed dress waiting at the bus stop. She smelt feral and her pupils had a hint of the lupine about them. The teenager in Los Angeles who was rail thin in skinny jeans and a red, red mouth that tried to pick Will up outside of a liquor store at two in the morning. He smelt like earth and age and spilt blood.

In the end, Will shrugged. "But nothing like you. And not here, not -"

"Not in what you consider your home territory." Hannibal offered. "It threw you. You feel threatened by me being here."

Will frowned. "I feel threatened by you, yes. But not because of anything to do with territorial instinct. I don't consider Baltimore my territory. You can stay here all you like, it doesn't bother me."

Hannibal smiled and Will didn't know him well enough to know if it was genuine or not. "That is good to hear. I would hate to disabuse you of any notions of moving me on."

Will stilled. "Was that a threat?"

“Not at all,” Hannibal said amiably. “I have set up a practise here in Baltimore for many years, i have a social life that i am rather fond of. Virginia has proved to be full of novel surprises.”

And now Will felt like Hannibal was complimenting him. Danger and seduction all rolled into one. Whoever Dr Lecter really was, he was so very dangerous for all kinds of reasons.

Will licked his lips and fidgeted in his seat, the movements going noticed by the good Doctor. “Can we get to the rubber stamping?”

Hannibal spoke as if Will hadn’t uttered a word. “As for me, i haven’t seen an Other for nearly a decade. I can’t help but question this coincidence as to be something more than that. Providence, perhaps.”

“You think it’s providence for us to meet?” Will asked incredulously.

This time Will knew the smile was genuine, it was fused with such warmth that it became hard to look at directly. “Why not? We are a rare breed, you and I. Would it not seem prudent to get to know each other? A little companionship?”

Companionship. The word was like a gut punch to the stomach and Will felt wounded. When was the last time he had companionship?

Far too long.

Will cleared his throat, looked at the spot just past Hannibal’s shoulder. “I don’t think that’s such a good idea.”

Hannibal’s gaze was direct and unyielding. “Are you not lonely amongst the humans, Will?”

Lonely? More like a yawning chasm inside of Will that seemed like it would never be filled. But that wasn't the point. Will had worked too hard to get where he was now for Hannibal and his companionship to ruin everything.

Even with this clamouring warning in his head, Will just couldn't help himself. Nothing could have stopped him from looking Hannibal in the eye and asking, "What are you?"

Hannibal's eyes sharpened on Will's face and Will felt locked into place, unable to move, to hide from him. It was the most disorienting feeling and Will didn't like it. He was used to hiding himself from other people, keep his secrets close but Hannibal was laying him bare for his own perusal.

"Most Others would not take kindly to being asked a question so direct as you have," Hannibal said. Despite his words, he didn't seem offended by Will's directness. In fact, he seemed delighted by it.

"Does that mean you won't answer my question?"

"On the contrary," Hannibal replied and in one blink of Will's eyelids, Hannibal had gone from sitting across from him to crouching in front of him, his hands on the armrests of Will's chair, effectively boxing him in. "What do I feel like to you?"

"Feel like?" Will wondered, unsure of his meaning, until he wasn't.

Hannibal let him *feel,* there was no other word for it. Hannibal Lecter had apparently been holding back, but now Will had asked him for it and the floodgates had opened.

Hannibal was old, centuries old, Will felt that age in his bones, made his brain buzz like bees had taken up residence in his skull. In his mind's eye, Will watched as Hannibal's human skin peeled back, his person suit, to reveal his true skin of pitch black, large stag antlers curling from his forehead to blot out the sunlight that filtered through the windows behind him.

His scent changes to something wild and powerful and Will had to fight himself to stop from leaning forward and burying his nose in the juncture between Hannibal's neck and shoulder.

Hannibal had no such qualms. His right hand left the arm rest and wrapped around Will's throat, gently, but firm. It should have been a threatening gesture, but instead Will felt cradled. His thumb swept against the vulnerable skin before he used it to tilt Will's head back so he was looking up at the ceiling above them. The grip tightened slightly, bringing him closer to Hannibal and Hannibal breathed in deeply, a low sound in his chest as he did so.

Will didn't even panic, he felt oddly detached from his body, accepting. No, *trusting* of this man to do as he pleased. Those hands were big, dexterous, Will had no care that he could just as easily break Will's neck before Will could pull away.

"I know what you are," Hannibal hummed. "I knew the moment I felt you behind my office door."

Will closed his eyes against the words, his secrets laid painfully bare for the other man to see. "How could you possibly know what I am?"

Hannibal didn't answer in words, instead electricity seemed to pass between them and Will shoved his seat away, the chair clattering back as it fell and he pulled away from Hannibal's hand to get distance between them. Hannibal's nails left red lines on Will's skin, blood trickling down to his shirt collar.

Hannibal contemplated the blood on his nails, before bringing them to his lips and sucking, the noise he made was almost obscene.

Will was left panting, his limbs twitching from whatever that energy had been. It felt like raw adrenaline coursing through his veins, his whole body lit up with it.

"What did you do to me?" Will demanded.

Hannibal slowly stood from his crouch, no longer showing his antlered form. He didn't look contrite at his actions, merely curious. "I gave you a taste of my energy. You were starving."

Will blinked at him, speechless. Christ, if that was simply a taste, Will couldn't imagine what a feeding would make him feel like. He hadn't felt this good in months at the very least.

"I'm fine," Will assured unnecessarily. "I wasn't starving. You had no right to do that."

He spoke angrily out of embarrassment than any real offense. He was embarrassed over how he had acted, offering his throat to a complete stranger like that. He was Incubus, he was used to others offering themselves up, not the other way around. He couldn't look Hannibal in the eye, choosing instead to busying himself with picking the chair up and placing it in its original position.

Hannibal drew himself up to standing again, but he kept his distance, which Will was grateful for. If he had tried to reach out to Will again, Will wasn't sure what he would have done.

"I would have to disagree Will," Hannibal said, once more that pleasant psychiatrist façade firmly back in place. "Your hunger is a palpable thing in this room, it washes off of you like heat. When was the last time you ate?"

Will knew he didn't mean actual food. "Two days ago." Will said, feeling oddly defiant. "And before that four days ago. Would you like me to keep a food diary so you can keep track of my feeding habits?"

Hannibal ignored the sarcasm. "I have no doubt that you skim off of people. I am referring to a full meal. Sating yourself, not just staving off of the hunger."

Will stared back at him, unblinking. "You mean a glut."

Hannibal titled his head. "You consider sating yourself a glut?"

Will made himself sit back down in the chair, to not be intimidated when Hannibal remained standing, towering over him. “What would you call it when that person you feed off of dies so you can feel ‘sated’?”

“I call it as natural and inevitable consequence between prey and predator.” Hannibal said like it really was the most natural thing in the world.

Will smiled, though it was more of a grimace rather than one born out of amusement. “You would have liked my mother. She felt the same way about humans.”

“Your mother,” Hannibal mused as he took his own seat. “Is she still with us?”

Will swallowed around the sudden hard lump in his throat. Even now it was difficult to think of her without feeling a great sense of loss. “I wouldn’t know. We parted company when I came of age. Haven’t heard from her since.”

Hannibal nodded like this wasn’t a surprise. “Two predators of your kind, sharing kills would bring out the worst in you, as you are used to a certain amount of undivided attention.”

“Even when the other predator was of your own blood?”

“Even then. Familial connection is always trumped by centuries of survival instinct. She was right to leave you. If she didn’t, it may have come to one of you dying for the other to live.”

It was as Will had thought himself, but the feeling of abandonment didn’t hurt any less. “And what about you?” Will asked, trying to deflect. “What about your family?”

Hannibal was silent for so long that Will thought he wouldn’t answer his question, but he seemed to pull himself from his reverie and finally said, “my family originated from Lithuania. It was my mother, father, sister and I. It was during the time Europe was gripped in

witch hysteria. If people, particularly women who didn't conform to religious ideals of womanhood or fit into their village's hierarchy, you were ostracised from it all. Considered damned, punishment was drowning or lynching. Being burnt alive for your sins. Not many families escaped the persecution, mine was no exception. I was the only one who survived, made my way to America after some unfinished business and made a life here."

The witch hysteria in Europe was at its height in the seventeenth century. Hannibal had to be over three hundred years old. "Were your family witches?"

Hannibal considered Will from across the space between them. "My mother was, yes."

Will frowned. "You were human?"

"Born human, absolutely. But I had the capacity for what made my Mother Other. When they came for my Mother and Sister Mischa, when they struck my father down and dragged them out of the house, it changed me. Their screams were like a siren call for the Otherness inside of me and i changed to what you now see before you."

Will swallowed with difficulty, his fertile imagination supplying him with images in red of how that change would have played out. "This unfinished business you spoke of. Would it have been the vengeance against your families tragedy?"

Hannibal's smile turned razor sharp. "To the very last man."

III

The local Sheriff department were not gracious in their welcome to Will and Jack when they arrived at the precinct. Police rarely were to other forces, particularly to those of the FBI. Jurisdiction was another word for a pissing contest, everyone was sure the other would steal the glory out from under them. Will didn't take it to heart, it was just another facet to the business of crime. Jack, however, didn't take it so well.

They had been sat in the waiting room for close to an hour now, an abrupt receptionist leaving them there with no offer of tea and coffee. Jack had taken a seat calmly enough, but as the minutes marched by with no sign of the police captain, he grew restless and stood to pace.

"You're going to wear a hole in the carpet if you keep that pacing up," Will pointed out as he glanced up from the case file he was catching up on.

Jack ignored him and carried on. "They asked us here, they should at least greet us."

Will sank deeper into the seat, his legs stretched out in front of him. "That would derive them the pleasure of showing us who is in charge here."

"At the cost of people's lives," Jack growled.

Will couldn't argue with that, not that he would anyway. Despite his calm demeanour, Will felt antsy. Self conscious. Through the windows of the waiting room that stood between them and the rest of the precinct where the detectives worked behind computers, they were being stared at. More specifically, Will was being stared at.

Like a zoo animal, an exotic specimen to be gawked at by the masses. He knew what they were all thinking, what they always thought about Will. A criminal profiler who could get into the minds of serial killers, who could think like them, predict their pattern. It was only one small step to becoming one of the killers and then they would have to hunt him down too.

Will looked back at the file and tuned all distractions out. Photographs were spread out in his lap, eight children in total. Five boys, three girls. Red hair, blonde hair, brown, black. Five white, two black, one Latino. There seemed to be no pattern to their appearance, then.

Perhaps the pattern lay in their economic circumstances of their parent's situation. None of them were wanting for money, their homes were large and had enough land to fit average sized houses several times over. Revenge against those who had more in life?

There was a map of the area, Crawford had marked the houses which had been hit. The area was sprawling, the houses on the outskirts of towns that were miles away. Each house were perhaps a few miles apart from each other, fields and creeks separating them.

But one thing did connect them. A dense forest that seemed to wrap around the curvature of the sloping area. The bodies had been dumped near their houses, but the lack of blood at the crime scene would prove the children weren't killed at the same place.

If Will was a killer (well, a human killer), the forest would be perfect for such a heinous act. There was no one around to hear the screams, no one to interrupt them. Dark, secluded, safe.

Jack's voice cut through his concentration like a whip. "Dr Lecter submitted a glowing report of you."

Will paused before he carefully piled the images back into the file and shut it. "You say that like your suspicious of it."

Jack turned to regard Will with a sardonic smile. "In all the time I've known you, I've never heard anyone refer to you in glowing terms. Genius? Yes. Unique? Often enough that i agree. More common terms I've heard are prickly, stubborn and a general asshole."

Will couldn't dredge up enough emotion to feel offended by that. They all had a point.

“But Mr Lecter referred to you as an exceptional individual capable of brilliant deduction through pure empathy.”

“Exceptional individual,” Will drawled, like he was mocking the term but oddly affected by it.

Jack hummed. “An empathic ability that could lead you down some dark paths if you’re not careful.”

Will rolled his eyes heavenward. “We both already knew that, Jack. He isn’t saying anything new.”

Jack shrugged. “Perhaps not, but he did recommend that you continued to see him for sessions for the foreseeable future-”

“You can’t be serious,” Will protested, feeling like he had been doused with cold water. “You told me all I had to do was see him once, you never said I had to continue to do so.”

“Well, I've changed my mind. Having a psychiatrist look out for you alongside me would ease my mind.” Jack held up his hand as Will opened his mouth. “I don’t want to hear it. These sessions will be informal and off the record. Dr Lecter has agreed to see you on these terms. Besides, I need my beauty sleep. I can’t be worrying whether your cracking under the pressure.”

Will couldn’t believe what he was hearing. “I don’t have any say in this matter, do I?”

“There’s a reason why people call you a genius,” Crawford smirked as the reception finally appeared and ushered them into the Captain’s office.

The man didn’t stand or offer a handshake, choosing to sit in his chair and stare at Crawford, before turning his eyes on Will He made no effort to hide his morbid curiosity, his heavy

hooded eyes sweeping Will up and down, the wrinkles in his bull dog face seemingly more pronounced with a frown.

Will fixed his gaze just over the man's shoulder and let Jack talk for the both of them.

"We'll need access to the latest victim's residence. It's simpler if Will sees the crime scene first hand," Jack was saying.

The Captain nodded slowly. "My officers will escort you there. They can answer any questions you might have," he said in his slow gruff voice, like the offer was ripped from him against his will.

The captain's tone of voice made the escort non-negotiable. Jack simply nodded once, probably not able to trust himself to be polite.

The Captain leant forward in his chair, making the seat creak ominously under his considerable bulk, lacing his hands together in front of him on the desk. He met Jack's gaze head on and Will couldn't help but give the man points for ballsy bravery. "Let's make one thing clear, right now," he said. "You are here for one thing and one thing only. To get in the head of these killers. Give me a profile and then be on your way."

Jack snorted. "That's not how this works, Captain. You asked the FBI for help and we gladly give it. But we won't be leaving until whoever is doing this is firmly locked behind bars or dead. We don't go home until the job is finished."

"You are here for one job-"

"And we will do it, you can be assured of it. But I or Mr Graham won't be leaving until then."

The two stared each other down, the atmosphere charged with their implacable wills. Will felt the odd man out and itching to get out of the room and into fresh air.

The Captain broke the staring contest to pin Will with his own glare. “You better be as good as the FBI make you out to be.”

Will didn’t reply, it felt safer to take the threat for what it was.

His silence only seemed to irritate the captain more. “A crazy chasing other crazies. What is the world coming to.”

Will’s anger made him want to reach out, grip the man by the front of his shirt and pull him up until they were flush against each other. The man would squirm to get away, perhaps he would bluster and strike out, but Will was stronger than the average human. He would revel in his confusion, his quickening panic, before he sealed his mouth over the Captain’s and suck all that life out of him until he was nothing but a husk in his chair.

Will’s hands tighten on the arms of the chair he was sitting in until his knuckles turned white with the pressure. Eventually, the feeling passed and he could breathe again.

Will smiled humourlessly. “You don’t have to worry, Captain. The FBI has my type of crazy on a very short leash.”

In Will’s peripheral vision, Jack scowled. Will couldn’t bring himself to care. He got up and left the room without a backward glance.

True to the Captain’s word, two police officers accompanied them to the victim’s house (Robert Blakely, aged 12, and Evie Blakely, aged 8), both keeping a respectable distance and

not asking any unnecessary questions of them. Will felt grateful for it, his nerves already frayed open by the flight and the precinct.

The house, or rather mansion when you consider the size of it, stood on sloping land and enclosed by a high wall with an electric gate at the bottom of a straight gravel driveway. Will could see the dark bricked house from in front of the gate, the venetian windows large and curtains still crossed, making the scene gloomy and despondent.

“Did the security system register any disturbance?” Jack asked as the officer keyed in the gate code. The door buzzed before the system pulled the doors open electronically.

“The system was turned off from 10:42pm,” the officer replied, getting back into the police car and driving up to the house. “It was never switched back on to register anything.”

“The coroner put the time of death of the parents between 11 and 11:30, I could take a wild guess and say it was deliberately switched off,” Jack said.

Will heard no more. The moment he entered the home, he was talking with ghosts. Methodically, he went through each room, the living room where the family relaxed, the kitchen where Mrs Blakely painstakingly cooked each and every meal for her growing children, the stairs where Evie would crouch at night to watch the television programmes that were too mature for her through the living room door before Robert would take her back to bed.

The first bedroom he came to was the master bedroom, the parent’s room. The scent of copper was in the air, heavy and cloying. Blood so dark in the gloom it appeared black spattered the walls, made from the knife that had cut down the mother and father, still laying prostrate in the bed. The father had been first, taking the first wound in the chest as he slept. The violence had woken the mother, her fear overridden by the desperate need to protect her husband. She had taken the first stab to the neck.

Will stopped, swayed on his feet, disorientated. He felt the pleasure of the act from the attacker, the satisfaction of the knife digging in deep until it scrapped bone. It was almost frenzied -

But he felt something else, a dark amusement, a nervous excitement -

There was more than one killer.

The emotions, the thoughts, were all jumbled together, a wreathing mass that just fuelled each killer on. It was not unlike a pack of animals, the way the blood lust spread between them.

“There’s more than one killer,” Will murmured and for the first time since stepping into the house, he was aware of the others with him. He felt the spark of shock between them.

Jack shifted. “There’s more than one serial killer?”

“I-” Will breathed in deep, trying to make sense of the seething thoughts. God, his head ached fiercely. He felt nauseous, so nauseous. “four,” he said, and he knew the truth the moment the number left his lips. “There were four here.”

“Christ almighty,” Jack breathed. “Four serial killers working together.”

Will moved on, drawn like a puppet on a string. The killer’s attention shifted away from the dying parents to further down the hallway where the children’s bedrooms were. Under the excitement, the death stench, Will sensed Robert above all.

He had awoken to the screams of his parents and the laughter of the killers. His first concern had been for Evie.

Will stood in the doorway of Robert’s bedroom, gazing upon the bed with the hastily thrown back covers, the stack of comic books next to the bed that had been knocked to the floor. Will took in the titles, Spiderman, X men, their pages well thumbed. A kid who loved superheroes saving the day...

Will tore his eyes from it, and followed the echo of Robert's flight to Evie's room across the hall. Evie's room was like a princess room, with soft pink walls and white furniture. Stuffed animals played witness to the events from their tumbled positions on the bed and the seat in the corner of the room. The happy childish atmosphere was spoiled by fear. Robert had snatched Evie out of bed but by then there was no escape. The men had cornered them in the room and their numbers and strength had been too much. Robert had tried to fight them as they took Evie from his arms and he got his arm broken for his troubles, his pain a sharp note of grating music in the air.

Will's arm ached in sympathy.

The men didn't bother to muffle their noise, there was no need to. There was no one to hear them take the children with them, disappearing into the night.

Will pulled back from the memory, felt the sickening feeling of vertigo when he centred himself in the present, and the wave of sheer hunger washed over him. He had expended too much energy, his reserves depleted to the point where he almost stumbled to his knees. The room tilted alarmingly and he sucked in a breath to fortify himself, grit his teeth through it.

The exertion made him hunger. He needed to feed badly.

Crawford shifted at Will's side, bringing Will back to himself and he turned to him. Crawford, in a rare moment of comfort, said, "They are still alive, Will."

Will turned away from the princess bedroom. "For the moment, perhaps. But for how long?"

The man in the checkout line at the local supermarket reminded Will of Dr Lecter.

He didn’t look like the psychiatrist as such, he was short where Hannibal was tall, black hair instead of fair and too round in the cheeks. But it was in the cut of the man’s suit, close to the angles of his body and clearly tailored. It was in the way the man held himself, assured in himself and that poise that made other people take a second look in admiration.

Will couldn’t take his eyes off of him. He watched him pack his groceries as quick as the checkout operator scanned them, paid for it with a card, before loading up his trolley and heading out into the car park.

Will didn’t even think. He abandoned his half full basket on the floor of the isle and followed him out. It was after five in the afternoon, the supermarket car park were packed from shoppers having just left work and come to pick up dinner for themselves and their family. Will’s eyes darted around the lot until he spotted the man - prey, heading for the convertible and loading up the boot with his groceries. Will took a deep breath, picking out the exhaust fumes, the scent from the bakery and the unmistakable scent of the prey he was tracking.

It most certainly wasn't anything like Hannibal’s scent, but it would have to do.

A wave of dizziness overcame Will and he staggered forward, catching himself at the last moment before he went to his knees with the ravenous hunger. He caught sight of himself in the reflection of a car door window and shuddered. His hunger was changing his appearance, making him luminous, practically vibrating with sexual energy and it showed. A woman just getting out of her car in a too tight skirt and red blouse gave him an appreciative once over, her arousal like a siren song.

He needed to feed. Now. Before he made any more of a scene.

Will turned away from her, focusing on the man again and prowled closer. He had just finished packing up the boot, shutting the door and turning around.

Will stood before him, almost swaying into him, and the man stopped in surprise, the trolley rolling away from his nerveless fingers.

Through the haze, Will registered the surprise dissolving into interest and then stark naked want. He reached out for Will, his left hand with the simple gold wedding band, and gripping Will by the bicep, reeling him in. There was no glimmer of guilt at seeing that symbol of fidelity, no second thoughts. There was only the overwhelming hunger and need.

Will pushed him back against his car, effectively hiding them between the opposite parked car and away from anyone who might happen to see them. He slotted their bodies together, revelling in the friction it caused, before he pressed his mouth against the other man's. Those lips willingly parted for him and he couldn't stop himself from moaning as life poured into him like warm sunshine against chilled skin. The man tightened his grip on Will, answering Will with one of his own, his excitement evident against Will's hip.

It was incredible, this feeling. It was sustenance to a starving man, it was restoration, it was sheer power.

"what would you call it when the person you feed off of dies so you can feel 'sated'?"

"I call it a natural and inevitable consequence between predator and prey."

Hannibal's voice in his head brought Will back to his senses faster than cold water to the face. Will ripped himself away and the man slumped against the car behind him, his eyelids fluttering before he collapsed to the floor, unconscious. There was now flecks of grey at his temples where there hadn't been before.

He had almost killed the man in broad daylight where anyone could have happened upon them.

The realisation made Will feel disgusted with himself. There was no giving that energy back, none that Will knew of anyway. Now having himself back under firm control, Will picked the man up, a shoulder under the man's armpit and trying the front passenger door. It was mercifully unlocked.

He pushed it open and arranged the unconscious man in the seat with his seat belt strapped around him. When he woke up, it would be to hangover like symptoms and no tangible memory of what had happened.

The only silver lining to this whole incident, Will thought as he slipped away to his car like nothing had happened, hands shaking.

When Will entered Hannibal's office that night at seven thirty on the dot, he felt the air shift somehow. A change in the atmosphere that made the hairs on his arms stand on end. He turned to face Hannibal, expecting to find him still at the door. Instead, he was right in front of Will, his nostrils flaring as he took a deep breath.

"You've fed recently," he said, his voice two or three octaves lower than it normally was. This close, Will could see his pupils blown wide.

Will drew away, uncomfortable under the other man's close scrutiny and mulish at being reminded of his near miss. "I had to. I worked a crime scene with Jack earlier today. It… drained me."

Hannibal let him pull away, though his scrutiny never let up. "You expend energy as you use your particular skill set to read the scene."

Will sat down in the chair afforded to him, rubbing at his temples. "Yes. It takes physical effort to untangle the emotions and thoughts of the victims from their killer. In this case, more than one killer. "

“And disentangling the thoughts of more than one killer takes a harder toll on you?” Hannibal asked as he sat in the opposite chair.

Will nodded. “It can. This one felt frenzied. Like their energy fed each other to new heights of blood lust.”

Hannibal nodded. “Pack mentality. Having others to share something like this makes it all the more enjoyable. It can even validate one’s existence.”

Will watched Hannibal and Hannibal watched him back. “Are we still talking about the killers or are we referring to people closer to home? As you've already pointed out, my kind are solitary hunters, we don't like any competition.”

“Hunting with your own kind, yes it wouldn't bode well,” Hannibal acquiesced. “Have you hunted with Others before?”

Will scowled. “You know I haven't.”

Hannibal dipped his head in acknowledgment. “Then who's to say you do not have the ability to hunt with another? To enjoy it? Be validated by it?”

Will remembered the times he hunted with his mother, tried to imagine another in her place. Tried to imagine Hannibal in that place. And though part of him balked at the very idea of it, a part of him shivered with it. Excited by it.

Will tried to scoff. “Two monsters against one Human is a little unfair, don’t you think? It wouldn’t be much sport at all.”

“Depends on the Human,” Hannibal returned, his expression the picture of affability as if they were merely talking about the weather. “After your experiences with the FBI, can you really say that some Humans don’t have what it takes to be good sport for the monsters?”

“Monster hunting monsters,” Will mused and whatever was in his voice or face seemed to please Hannibal.

Hannibal changed the subject, perhaps thinking he had pushed enough in that regard. “Do you want to talk about your feeding earlier today?”

Will shrugged, turning away. “Not much to talk about. I was at the supermarket, I got hungry, I followed a man to his car and I fed from him. No killing involved.”

“Risky, to feed with others about you.”

“I was *very* hungry.”

Hannibal’s lips curved. “What made you choose that man to feed from?”

Because he looked like you.

“He smelt good, full of energy. He was well groomed and I couldn’t help myself. As I said, I was drained and I needed to feed as soon as possible.”

“Because you were drained. If you plan on catching these killers, you’ll need to feed more often.” Hannibal advised.

Will laughed without any real humour. “You make it sound so easy.”

Hannibal watched him. “It could be, if you let it.”

Will frowned, licking his suddenly dry lips. “What do you mean? How could it be easy if I let it?”

Hannibal leant forward in his chair, elbows on his knees. “I’ve asked Jack to accompany you at your crime scenes. To see how you work and help you keep safe in what my role as your psychiatrist can offer. Jack has cleared me to do so.”

Will stared at him. “Were either of you going to tell me this at any point or was it going to be a surprise?”

“It was an idea I had when I was in a meeting with Jack, it was spontaneous. I wanted to make sure that I was allowed to do so before coming to you with it.”

Hannibal’s face looked earnest enough, but Will doubted the man did anything spontaneous. He was meticulous in nature.

“And how is you being at the crime scenes with me meant to make my feeding easier?” Will asked, nonplussed.

“Because it would mean you could feed from me.”

It took a moment for what Hannibal had said to sink in. “Feed from you? You can’t possibly mean that.”

“I do,” Hannibal said, keeping their eye contact. “You reacted to my energy like it was magnetized. You absorbed it like it was nothing. And I am willing to hypothesize that my energy would sustain you for far longer than any human could.”

God help him, Hannibal looked smug about it. “I’m not going to feed from you,” Will protested.

“Why not?”

“I would harm you, for one thing.” Will pointed out.

Hannibal smiled, amused. “I think you underestimate me.”

More than likely. “I think you underestimate my hunger.” Will countered.

“Oh no,” Hannibal assured, and a look passed over his features that Will could only call predatory. “I don’t think I could. In fact, I'm counting on it.”

Will had no answer to that. He couldn’t fathom why Hannibal would offer himself up like that for Will to use to sate himself. “What do you gain from me feeding off of you?”

Hannibal paused to think his answer through. “To keep you alive, for one thing. You haven’t been taking care of yourself.”

Will laughed. “You want to be my caregiver?”

“I draw pleasure from being able to take care of those I esteem, yes.” Hannibal said. “Maintaining a relationship where you feed from me for your energy and I get to provide it gives us an even footing in terms of trust, too, don’t you think.”

Will blinked. “Trust, or do you mean a mutual need for each other? One where we have no choice but to keep each other close?”

Hannibal’s eyes shone. “In my experience, they are one and the same thing.”

“For me, the are mutually exclusive.”

Hannibal smiled again. “Think on it. When we next meet, I'd like to hear your answer.”

IV

Will dreamt of Hannibal that night, a convoluted mess of images and thoughts and impressions that left Will disorientated and achingly hard. He dreamt of Hannibal's throat, the smooth vulnerable skin laid bare at the v of an undone shirt collar. His long tapered fingers as they held his moleskin journal and his fountain pen, writing God knows what in one of their interviews. Those dark eyes, always watching Will, intent. Assessing. Ever watchful.

But most of all, Will dreamt of what it would be like if Will fell into temptation and allowed himself to taste Hannibal's energy. To let Hannibal flow into him, be warmed and invigorated by him. Will had no doubt it would turn sexual, they had that certain connection, and that-

Well, it had possibilities. Good and bad and Will wasn't sure which Hannibal would fall on.

And if Will did give in to Hannibal and his offer, what then?

What was Hannibal's end game and how did Will factor into it?

He needed more answers.

Will was pulled from his thoughts by his phone ringing. He glanced at the alarm clock on his bedside table, the glowing red numbers reading 2:15AM. His stomach gave a nausea inducing flip. There would be only one reason someone would be calling him in the middle of the night.

He picked up the receiver with trembling fingers, his voice scratchy from sleep. "Will Graham speaking."

"Will," Jack said from the other end of the phone line, his tone of voice heavy and Will didn't need to hear anymore. He knew what was coming.

He closed his eyes and rubbed tiredly at his forehead, like he could scrub the knowledge right out of his skin. “Where did you find them?”

“A dog walker called it in,” Jack said. “She couldn’t sleep so she went out with the family dog. Took a well used path along the tree line of the forest about two miles from the Weller residence.”

Will breathed through his nose and out through his mouth in slow gulps. “They are killing the children in the woods and dumping their bodies on the outskirts so people will find them and be frightened. They are using the woods as their playground, Jack. It’s their territory and they are actively claiming it.”

“I know. The FBI will be pooling its resources with the local police force. We are using sniffer dog teams and every available man to comb the woods in a five mile radius. I need you down here now, Will.”

Will didn’t even hesitate. “Where are you?”

Jack gave him detailed directions which Will wrote down on a scrap piece of a receipt he found in one of his bedside drawers. “I’ll be there as soon as i can.”

“I’ve asked Dr Lecter to come along with us in a psychological capacity,” Jack added, like it was no big deal.

Will paused in his scramble to find a clean shirt. “I don’t think that’s such a good idea.”

“I’ve already asked him, Will, he’s on his way to the location as we speak.” The no nonsense tone was back and Will knew he wasn’t going to win any arguments at this point. “I think it would be a very good idea for him to watch over you while we conduct the manhunt. We don’t want you getting too close like you did with the Garrett Jacob Hobbs.”

The flippant accusation stung and Will gritted his teeth to reign in the defensive counter arguments of *whose fault was that* ? And *I told you this could happen again, but you ignore it all in favour of positive results* . It wouldn't do for getting into a shouting match with Jack Crawford who could bellow until your brain was practically leaking out of your ears. "I don't need a babysitter, Jack."

"Don't act like a petulant child then, Will. I'm siccing him on you so i can get my beauty sleep knowing you're in the safe hands of a professional."

Will didn't get to form a reply as Jack had already disconnected the call. Will hissed air through his teeth before throwing the phone on his bed.

This, Will thought with a growing sense of foreboding, could only end in someone dying or grievously injured. Probably by Hannibal's hands, if the good Doctor had any say in it.

By the time Will had got to Jack's location, it was almost four in the morning. They were well into October so it was still as dark as if it was at midnight. The temperature had dropped considerably, especially as they were out of the city. Will's breath misted in the air like smoke and the grass crunched under his feet with frost.

The area in question was a farmer's field backing onto the treeline, the resident farmer allowing ramblers to use the top stone walkway through his field for walks. It looked like Will was one of the last to arrive, the narrow road running along the line of the field and the field itself was backed with Police cars and black vans. Up at the woods, the scene was lit up by flood lights reconstructed for events such as these, the only bright spot on the landscape. After flashing his honorary FBI badge at a uniformed officer at the field's rusty gates, Will managed to nudge into a tight spot between a cruiser and a buick.

As he stepped out of his car, he was greeted with a chorus of excited barks from the police sniffer dog teams that were further up the field.

Slouching in his winter jacket, Will navigated through the labyrinth of cars and people to the lit area, immediately spotting Jack in his dark wool coat and black fedora. He was looking on as his team of Katz, Zeller and Price finish up with their crime scene.

Beside him stood Hannibal and it took a moment to recognise him. Will had only ever seen him dress in bespoke tailored suits and Italian leather shoes. Here he was dressed in khaki walking trousers, sturdy work boots and a red sweater under a dark knee length coat. Even without the suit, he still looked more sophisticated than anyone there.

Jack spotted Will in the crowd and motioned him over. “We’re wrapping up the scene now,” he explained. “Like the other children found, same serial killers we are dealing with.”

Will felt Hannibal’s eyes on him but he kept his own averted, not sure if he wanted to know what expression the other man was pulling. Instead, Will concentrated on the scene in front of them. The two children, Robert and Evie, were sprawled across the grass, naked, Robert’s hand thrown out to his little sister, reaching, protecting, even in death. There was bruising around their lips, wrists and ankles, signs that they had been restrained after they had been taken from the house. Robert’s broken arm, an injury he had sustained during the struggle, was swollen and mottled in colour.

They didn’t do anything to set it or relieve the angle it had been in. The boy must have been in agony for the last few days he was held captive.

Their necks were an angry red with fingerprint marks. They had been strangled to death, then. Small mercies, when you consider the serial killers were cannibals.

Will turned away, the image forever branded behind his retinas. Too late, far too late.

“You don’t want me to interpret the scene?” Will asked with a calm voice, but inside he was screaming *Don’t make me see these kid’s last moments…*

“There’s little point,” Jack responded. “Katz has the scene in hand and the police captain is itching to get the man hunt started. You and Dr Lecter will be part of the dog team and officer unit that will be covering the empty holiday lets in the north west part of the woods. You’ll be leaving soon.”

Will nodded his understanding. “And you?”

Jack shrugged his big shoulders. “With the Captain’s team. It seems he wants to know where i am at all times.”

“Afraid that you’ll kick the killer’s ass and take all the glory for the FBI, boss,” Katz said as she picked herself up from kneeling next to the bodies.

“Santa Claus can revel in the glory for all i care. Just as long as we catch every one of the sick bastards.” Jack replied before he headed off towards the group that had surrounded the police captain and his behemoth of a map.

Hannibal had been silent up until this point and Will couldn’t help himself to glance in the Doctor’s direction. He stood with his hands in his coat pockets, calmly surveying everything. He met Will’s gaze with a flash of amusement and Will got the distinct impression it was directed at him. Hannibal knew that Will was distancing himself from him, but seemed unperturbed by it.

He was a patient man, after all.

“Are you along for the ride, Doctor Lecter?” Katz asked as her eyes swept over Hannibal before flicking to Will for a brief moment, and then settling on Hannibal again. The tension between them had clearly been noticed by the perceptive pathologist.

“Jack was obliging enough to let me shadow Will during the investigation,” Hannibal answered amiably. “This will be a most enlightening experience.”

Katz snorted. “Well, if you make any headway in that giant brain of Will’s, you’ll be sure to let me in on it.”

“No one is getting inside my head,” Will cut in with a grimace, glaring at katz who merely grinned back unrepentantly. “Are you joining in on the search?”

Katz shook her head. “Not this time. Jack wants us to get back to the lab and start processing the bodies. The pleasure of wading through nettles in the dead of night and freezing your balls off is all for you boys. Enjoy.”

With a cheery wave, she left them to join Price and Zeller. Will had a second of childish panic of being left alone with Hannibal, like he could use her as a human shield against Hannibal's attention. He even opened his mouth to call out to her, but caught himself before he made a sound. The ensuing conversation would have been embarrassing.

"Shall we?" Hannibal asked, his arm sweeping out in the direction of the group they were meant to join, a courtly gesture that straightened Will's spine in offence.

Will started walking but paused as he drew even with Hannibal, making eye contact and holding it deliberately. He pitched his voice low so only Hannibal could hear him. "What are you really doing here, Hannibal? What are you after?"

Will tended to forget that they were of similar height, as Hannibal had a presence that made him feel larger than he really was, a presence that wanted to overwhelm Will at any given moment. When Hannibal leant closer, Will felt the other man's breath flutter against his lips. "I told you, I simply want to observe your process during a murder investigation. All the better to help you cope with it."

"Observe," Will hummed, sinking all the disbelief he felt into that one word so it practically resonated with it. "I don't like it when people lie to me."

Hannibal looked the very picture of affable innocence. "You have my word that observing you is all I'm here for. I swear it."

Will searched his face for any sign of deception, but he found none that he recognised. It struck Will that, while Hannibal may be one of the monsters, his word once given was something to rely on.

Will gave a small nod. “Just so we are both clear," he murmured, before starting across the field to join their team with Hannibal trailing along behind him like a satisfied shadow.

It didn't take very long to get everyone organised and to start the sweeping search across the forested ground. Not exactly surprising, when they were trying to catch child killers and they had all been witnesses to the crime scene. Child killers and rapists brought out the hunters in a lot of police officers, often ending in the perpetrators spending a while in the hospital for injuries sustained in their arrest.

Every person was equipped with a standard issue flashlight, radio, whistle, firearm and a bullet proof vest. The killers had used knives instead of guns but there was no telling what they had in their possession, nor what they would do once they felt trapped.

From there, each team had five sniffer dogs that were all pulling at their leashes, tails wagging furiously amongst the excitement.

Leading the team was a middle aged officer by the name of Charles Williams who didn't bat an eyelid at having Will and a psychiatrist join him.

They started in a row of twelve, Williams on Will's left and Hannibal on his right, and they waded into the forest at a slow pace, flash lights scanning the ground ahead of them as the dogs and their handlers were ahead, their barking echoing in the night's silence.

In hindsight, Will should have thought twice about using his unique skill set to help find the killers, particularly when Hannibal was involved. But Will wasn't thinking of that, not when the ghostly images of the victim's faces appeared everyone he so much as closed his eyes at night.

Will focused his thoughts outwards, let his senses sweep the area around him, brushing the bright energy of the police around him, the more opaque signatures of the dogs and the incredibly powerful energy of Hannibal. Will shivered, the incubus in him wanting to latch onto that energy, to writhe and revel unit until he was drunk from it.

Will felt that energy respond to him, like it knew he was aware of it. It unfurled like great wings from Hannibal and reached out for Will, grasping, cajoling, but Will pulled away from it. It hurt to do so, his whole being shuddering with the effort. He wanted so badly to give in, but-

Now was not the time.

He extended himself further, blanketing the forest and sensing the slumbering animals in their burrows and the nocturne ones hunting the forest for a meal. He knew they sensed him back and they took startled flight, taking him for a predator. He ignored them in favour of bugger prey.

The strain was getting to him, he had never extended himself this far before. Sweat began to prickle along his hairline, down in the dip of his spine. But he kept pushing, deeper and deeper into the woods, until he came upon the vacation homes that now stood empty of tenants, the holiday months we'll and truly over.

Except they weren't empty.

He felt four insidious energy signatures in the house on the far left, grouped together in one of the upper rooms. They were relaxed, exultant, their life forces burning an orange colour. There was no bitter tang of fear, they were completely unaware of the manhunt closing in on them. Good. The closer they can get to them with the dogs, the better.

By the sounds of fevered barking, the dogs had also picked up their trail.

Will came back to himself with a gasp, the disorientation making him stumble forward. He would have ended on his knees in the dirt if it wasn't for the steadying hand at his elbow. Looking up, Will found Hannibal at his side with a look of concern on his face.

"They're here," Will said by way of explanation.

Hannibal cocked his head slightly, considering. "You know this?"

Will drew his arm out of Hannibal's grip gently. "I felt their energy. Up ahead, in the house to the left."

Hannibal didn’t have the chance to reply as there was a sudden crack of gunfire and leaves from above rained down on their heads.

“Down!” Williams bellowed and every officer took cover on their bellies behind the large trunk of trees or buried rock as more bullets whizzed overhead.

Hannibal’s hand was wrapped in the fabric of Will’s shirt collar and he dragged him to the forest floor behind the great base of the tree, bracing Will’s body with his own. Around them, officers were yelling on their radios for backup and returning fire with their own service weapons.

Will twisted on his side to get a look around the tree trunk and see where their quarry was firing from. In the top right window of the house he spotted the long muzzle of a shotgun resting out the window sill, a dark silhouette taking shelter behind it.

The noise of the gunshots was deafening, Will's ears ringing with the return fire all around them and a sense of disembodiment fell over him. He was a witness to it all, but it felt like he was completely separate from it all. Out of his own body. If he was to get shot now, would he even feel it penetrate his flesh? The warmth of his blood as it spilled down? The blossoming pain of the bullet striking his vest?

Will must have missed some kind of signal as the officers around him stood from their crouched positions and advanced on the house with their guns still firing at the windows. On auto-pilot, Will went to stand with them, but Hannibal's arm that was still wrapped around his waist was like a band of unrelenting steel, keeping him in place. A frisson of frustration broke the dissonance and he turned his head to the side to glare at Hannibal from over his shoulder. "Let me go," he hissed at the other man.

Hannibal's face was so close to Will's own that they were practically sharing each other's breath. Will could see tiny flecks of gold in the man's dark eyes, the sweeping eyelashes against his cheeks as the other man blinked.

Hannibal caught Will's eyes before tilting his chin in the direction to the right of the line of houses. Will followed the movement, gaze flickering between the trees and their long shadows before he caught the movement of a figure. Pausing, Will squinted into the darkness and, with the help of his incubi senses, he was able to pick out a man fleeing. Will knew instinctively that it was one of the killers making a run for it.

None of the other officers had seen the man leave the house, had any idea that one of their targets was taking flight in the opposite direction. Will briefly considered calling out to them to gain their attention, but his voice would never be heard over the persistent shouting and firing of the others.

Will didn't give too much thought into what he was doing. He was up and running after the killer, afraid that if he wasted anymore precious time, he would lose the man in the trees.

Will took off without so much as a look back, the trees once again enclosing him on all sides and the man had left a very easy trail of broken branches and disturbed soil to follow. Will could hear the sound of Hannibal right behind him and he had a moment of panic where it felt like the other man was in fact hunting him.

Don't be so stupid.

Or was he?

The killer was not unaware that he was being pursued. Judging by his garbled curses that fell along the lines of "Fuck you pigs!", and "I'll shoot your fucking face off if you come anywhere near me". Will wasn't too concerned at this point as the man was shooting wildly over his shoulder, the bullets far off their intended target, thudding into the bark of trees metres away from him.

That was until it all suddenly went silent, and Will was too slow to notice it, too wrapped up in keeping his breathing even as he upped his speed to catch up. Will burst through the trees and come to a staggering holt as he was faced with the killer who was standing still and aiming the gun at Will's head.

The world around them slowed down, Will's instincts hyper focused on those precious few moments. The gun went off with a loud bang and a jerk, but Will was already moving, the bullet grazing the side of his head before harmlessly zipping past somewhere in the darkness of the woods. Blood trailed hotly down Will's perspiring face, but he was alive and relatively unharmed.

Will staggered to the side and the killer swivelled his gun back in Will's direction and Will had no choice but to make a desperate lunge for the man. What ensued was a messy, chaotic struggle over the gun. The killer was of similar height and he weighed a good thirty pounds more than Will, but Will had adrenaline on his side and a certain scrappiness that made him a dirty, effective fighter.

No such thing as dirty when you were fighting for your life.

Will pulled the gun to one side, jabbing a pointy elbow into the man's neck, causing him to gag loudly, but it didn't loosen his hold on the weapon. In retaliation, the killer brought his knee up viciously to connect with Will's outer thigh and Will let out a pained grunt, his leg nearly buckling out from under him from the force.

Unsuccessful with that attempt, the killer reared his head back to smash it into Will's nose, but he had broadcasted his intent. When he pulled forward, Will used the man's momentum to swing him around and throw him to the floor. It was brutal and inelegant and Will couldn't help but feel a moment of smug satisfaction as the man yelled out in pain. The gun went flying out of their hands and, as if to make up for it, the killer gripped the front of Will's bullet vest and took Will down with him.

Will fell hard on top of the killer, the air whooshing out of his lungs in a noisy hiss between his clenched teeth. The killer kicked out again, fists flailing wildly and Will had no choice but to roll off of him to stop himself from being brained.

The man gave chase and rolled after him, face contorted in snarling rage, his teeth bared like a wolf. He pinned Will to the forest floor by a large hand around his throat and, using his weight, started to strangle the very life out of Will.

Where the hell was Hannibal in all of this?

Will tried to prise the hand from around his neck, but he didn't have the leverage to dislodge the grip. Will looked wildly around for the gun, an arm brushing the wooded floor in hopes of brushing against cold metal of the dropped gun. He found nothing but old leaves and loose soil against his fingertips.

Will's eyes lighted upon movement to his left and there, finally, was Hannibal. He was standing a few feet away, stationary, merely watching the proceedings with a curious look that wouldn't have been out of place in someone who was observing an animal at the zoo. There was no alarm in that expression, only what looked like enjoyment. He was enjoying it.

When their eyes met, Hannibal's eyes darkened into something that could only be called hunger. Will knew that the other man had wanted by coming along to the search. Hannibal didn't have to utter a syllable to know exactly what he was thinking (now wasn't that a terrifying thought). Will knew for a fact that Hannibal had hoped for this outcome, or for a similar one where Will would be put into the position to kill one of the men he had to apprehend that night.

And he got to watch it all unfold right before his eyes.

Hannibal raised his eyebrows in enquiry, as if he was saying *what are you waiting for?*

He had no gun. No one to help him.

So what are you waiting for?

Will knew what Hannibal wanted him to do, to unleash his incubus side and consume everything in his path. And, God help him, there was no other choice. He wasn't strong enough to do it any other way.

Will could see darkness creeping in at the edges of his vision, his lungs burning for air, his throat raw as those unrelenting hands tightened further. Will's glamour fanned out and the killer's eyes widened as he stared down at Will wonderingly. His hand loosened from around Will's neck, fingers trailing along exposed skin to his collarbones and Will didn't leave the distraction to chance.

He swung his arm up and clipped the man across his face, causing his head to snap back and unbalance him from his perch on top of Will. Will followed him to end up with their positions reversed with Will now on top of the killer. There was no stopping it once it had started. The excitement of the chase and the ensuing scuffle made Will ravenous and he drank the man in, much to the delight of his victim.

Hannibal's approval was like a warm hand at his back, gently coaxing him on. And that, right there, was what snapped Will back into the here and now and Will gasped, dropping the killer back to the floor like Will was burned.

The man was unconscious, but he still had a sluggish heartbeat. Will's eyes met Hannibal's and stayed there. He reached down, hands on either side of the killer's face and, with one sharp tug to the side, snapped his neck.

Hannibal watched it all with a smile on his lips.

V

When all the shooting and the yelling had dwindled down to a heavy murmur, when the police officers were able to arrest one of the three killers and bundled him into a police cruiser and the other two left the scene in body bags, Will felt the adrenaline drain from his body and he began to shake from the comedown.

Crawford took one look at him and strong armed Will into the back of a waiting ambulance to get the bullet graze on the side of his head looked at and cleaned up by the paramedics. At the same time that Will was half heartedly protesting over the fuss, Hannibal melted into the crowd and disappeared from sight. Will wasn't going to lie and say he wasn't at least a little bit relieved to get away from that all-seeing gaze of the other man.

"You're very lucky," the female paramedic said as she used a swab to clean the wound with an antibacterial solution that made Will hiss at the sting. "An inch or so closer and it would have entered your skull through your eye socket."

"Thanks for pointing that out," Will said flatly.

The paramedic grinned easily, her white teeth flashing in the fluorescent lighting of the ambulance. "You have to look on the bright side of this whole incident. You're still alive and kicking, aren't you? You can impress your friends and loved ones by regaling the story of surviving a serial killer."

It was a close call. If Will had been entirely human, it was unlikely he would have been able to overpower the killer and get the better of him.

Don't dance around the subject, you didn't overpower him, you killed him. Murdered him. Fourteen years of not killing anyone and you broke that streak because Hannibal Lecter goaded you.

And what did that say about Will?

He was weak. Easily manipulated and open to the slightest encouragement. The monster in him was not as under control as he had previously thought.

God, he was tired. Exhausted right down to the bone from lack of sleep and the heavy slog of going through the motions of living day to day.

Bored.

Numb.

Lonely.

So very lonely.

Hannibal had said a similar thing, hadn't he? Two Others in a sea of Humans, they tended to gravitate towards each other, out of a common feeling of isolation. A need to feel a connection to someone. Was that what this pull to Hannibal was? Out of loneliness?

Whatever it was, it was dangerous. Volatile. Reckless. He couldn't afford to lose himself like that again, not just because he killed someone, but what if they had been happened upon while he had fed from the killer? Out in the open with armed police surrounding them, it didn't bear thinking about.

"Looks like you don't need any stitches," the paramedic said as she gently probed at the cut with a gloved finger. "Just a bit of tape and a gauze pad and you're good to go."

Crawford had been standing to the side, his impatience radiating throughout his body language and stifling the small confines of the ambulance. "Glad to hear it. Pick yourself up, Will. I want to be there as a witness when they interview the man and break him apart."

"And you need me for that?" Will asked, but was already getting up to be shepherded out of the vehicle.

“Of course I do. Your insight has been invaluable so far.”

Sure, in breaking one of the killer’s necks, Will thought but didn’t voice. Some things were better left well enough alone.

Will glanced around the field to see that it was steadily depleting of people and their cars. The people still milling about were part of the teams that were recording the scenes for investigation purposes.

No Hannibal to be seen.

“Did Hannibal leave?” Will asked, trying to play it nonchalantly but missing it by a mile.

Crawford nodded as they trekked across the field towards their cars. “I sent him home. As he is technically a civilian, I think he’s had more than his fair share of excitement for one night.”

“Ah,” Will said for nothing better to say.

“I’ve asked him to in later tomorrow so the local detectives can take his statement for what happened to our killer with the broken neck,” Crawford said before stopping, checking his watch. “Or later today, as the case may be.”

Will glanced at Crawford sharply, trying to gage his tone of voice to be suspicious or accusing, but his face was impassive. “Will there be an inquest into the two deaths of our suspects?”

“There won’t be a witch hunt, if that’s what your asking,” Crawford said before patting Will on the back. “When they don’t come quietly and start shooting, deaths are unfortunately a common result. Just not on our side, thank god. The witness statements is more to appease the higher ups, crossing the t’s and dotting the i’s, so to speak.”

“I’m sure Dr Lecter will give a very thorough statement,” Will murmured, meaning the complete opposite.

To nobody’s surprise, the local PD wanted all FBI and FBI advisors to stay well out of the way in the observation room that looked onto the interrogation room three through a one way mirror. Crawford, for the first time, didn’t bother arguing. He had gotten what he wanted, a front and centre view of the confession.

The interrogation room was a standard police room the world over, with no windows and harsh fluorescent strip lights in the ceiling, bleaching everything a course white. There was a desk in the middle of the space, with two sets of chairs on either side, two for the detectives and two for the killer and his solicitor. Recording equipment was sat to the side of the desk, big and complicated to make the interrogated very aware that their every word, cough and movement was being taped.

The Chief Captain himself was sitting in on this one, along with one of his senior deputies, a forty something tall rail thin man with pale blue piercing eyes and a 60s no nonsense moustache.

On the other side of the desk sat the solicitor, a state paid legal aid and he looked like it. He was in his late twenties, a poorly fitted suit with sweat beading on his upper lip. He had a styrofoam cup of coffee and when he raised it to take a sip, there was a discernible tremor in his arm. Will wondered if it was nerves being involved in such a high-profile case or whether it was because he sat next to a cannibalistic child killer.

The cannibalistic child killer in question was sat in his chair, legs stretched out in front of him and his arm was thrown over the back of the seat. He looked completely at ease, despite the

fact that his two accomplices were dead and he had been arrested with the threat of never having a free day for the rest of his life.

His file, which the analysts managed to pull from police records using his finger prints stated that his name was Michael Cole, a thirty four year old Texan, but he looked much older than that. His dark hair was long and lank around a sharp sneering face. He was well over six feet tall with the type of build that you get from working long hours in something like construction. His skin was a dark brown, leathery, probably from working in said Texan heat. Will could quite easily see this man having the strength to subdue the parents fighting for their lives and for the lives of their children.

Will crossed his arms over his chest, fingers digging into the flesh of his arms as he remembered the sick excitement he had felt in Robert and Evie's house as the they killed the parents and took the children with them.

He didn't deserve to be breathing when those children were dead. Yet here he was, acting like he didn't have a care in the world, like the police and the law and *life* were beneath him.

The blood rushing in his ears made him deaf to what was being asked, but Will recognised the tone of voice of Michael to be a sneering drawl, as if this was all a game to him. Will continued to watch him, to study his body language. If he concentrated hard enough, he could hear his heartbeat, the hiss of air as he breathed in and out through his mouth. The heartbeats were a little faster than normal, he was perhaps a little affected by being caught, but he wasn't frightened by the prospect of life on the inside.

Perhaps he thought victims would be more of a challenge in a place like prison.

"Why children?" The police captain demanded as he spread the pictures of all the victim's faces out on the table for Michael to look at them. Michael didn't even bat an eyelash, no flinch from being confronted with what he had done. "Why would you target children?"

Michael smiled at the captain. "Why do any of us eat young meat like veal? Because the meat is more tender, juicier."

He traced his fingers along Bethany Alder's face, one of the first victims to be kidnapped and murdered. "The girls were my favourite. So sweet."

The captain's face was one of pure disgust. It looked like he was a second away from leaping across the desk between them and strangle Michael with his bare hands. He reigned himself back in long enough to ask another question. "And murdering the parents?"

Michael shrugged his shoulders. "For the sport, of course. Because we could." He stared the police Captain down with that disconcerting stare of his. "You could say it was a mercy killing. Those parents lost their children right from under their noses. Better to die there than live in their grief."

The deputy shook his head. "You're a real piece of work, you know that?"

Michael's eyes narrowed on the deputy, the first flash of emotion Will had seen him exude since they slapped the cuffs on him. "What would you know about it, pig? It took you long enough to catch us, didn't it."

The Deputy was about to jump to his feet but the captain put a restraining hand on his shoulder and the Deputy subsided. "But now we've caught you and two of your buddies are dead. What about the fourth one? Where's he at?"

He should have been an actor, Will thought as he watched Michael Cole keep a blank face, hardly a flicker at the mention of a fourth accomplice.

"Fourth? What are you talking about? There was three of us. Can't you count?"

Liar. Will heard his heart jump as he spoke, saw the dark pupil of his shrewd eyes expand and contract.

"Our expert profiler says otherwise. There were four of you."

"Got any proof to back up your accusations? 'cause I say there were three of us and I bet you got nothing but the word of a pig to go on."

The legal aid cleared his throat, the first sound out of his mouth during the whole interview. "There were three men apprehended. Without tangible evidence of a fourth, it's only guesswork."

"The profiler has been right in every other account," the Captain cut in. "He knew where to find you, knew what you were up to with what you cut from the victims. In fact," here the Captain smiled a satisfied smile. "He took down your buddy who tried to make a run for it in the woods. Broke his neck like it was nothing."

Will shifted uncomfortably at the reminder, but didn't take his eyes away from Michael. He no longer looked like it was all a game now.

He leant forward in his seat, ignored the stuttered protestations of his legal aid, and said through gritted teeth, "How about you bring that profiler in here, with all of his accusations and strength. Let's see how he holds up in a fair fight against me."

Will turned to Crawford. "Can I?"

Crawford scowled. "Don't be stupid."

Will shrugged. "Just a thought."

"Are you sure there was a fourth one, Will?" Crawford asked, voice low so the other police officers in the room with them couldn't hear what he was saying. "It seems odd that he wouldn't be there for the… Eating."

And here's the part where Will couldn't back his findings up. He knew, without a doubt thanks to his abilities, that there was a fourth one. But, as a human profiler, he couldn't go against the evidence available on a 'hunch'. He couldn't explain it without being laughed out of the FBI as a fraud, or worse, insane.

"There's a possibility that there had been three of them instead of four," Will said with an air of caution. "But until all the evidence has been recorded, I wouldn't discount a fourth killer just yet."

"Alright," Crawford nodded. "If there is a fourth one, he'll be worried now that his friends have been either killed or taken into custody. He'll make a mistake."

Or he'll go to ground and no one will find him.

The Captain and his Deputy kept hammering away at him, but he wouldn't budge on denying there was four of them. "Besides," he said, twisting the knife in. "I had to share the meat with two other guys. Why would I share with another one?"

Seeing no other course, the Captain ended the interview and sent Michael to the cells under armed guard. Will watched him go with a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach.

Crawford turned to Will, looking him up and down, before coming to a decision. "Go home, Will. You look like shit."

Will touched the gauze pad on the side of his head self consciously. The wound had now settled down to a dull throb. "Yeah, thanks for that."

"I mean it, Will. Get some rest. I'll let you know what happens with the evidence once its done."

Will didn't argue. There was nothing more he could do hanging around the police station like a melancholy ghost with dried blood on his face and shirt collar. Will took the dismissal with

a more sincere thanks.

Except he didn't go home. He sat in his car with his head back against the headrest and his eyes shut against the world, thinking. His brain helpfully supplied a blow by blow account of the night's occurrences in stunning HD detail. It paid special attention to the chase in the woods, the struggle, Hannibal watching as Will snapped the man's neck with his bare hands.

Will inserted the car key into the lock and turned the engine on. It was like he was stuck on auto pilot, peeling out of the car park and winding his way through the streets and before he knew it, he had arrived at his destination with the car idling, the tremors reverberating through his hands that rested on the steering wheel. He peered out of the car window at the building he was parked outside. It was now early morning and Will could see the familiar structure of Dr Lecter's office.

Will peered up at the floor that Hannibal's office was on, all the while wandering why he was even here in the first place. He didn't know where the man lived, which was probably a good thing. If he had known the address and turned up at it, what would he have said when Hannibal opened the door to him? *Sorry for dropping in on you like this, but I couldn't just leave what happened in the woods to rest?*

Hannibal was at home now, sleeping after being awake for most of the night -

Hannibal was standing at the window, staring down onto the street at Will, his hands behind his back in a relaxed pose. He had forgone the coat he had been wearing and was now dressed in what looked like a red jumper that made him look soft and tangible.

When their eyes met, Hannibal inclined his head in the direction of the building's front door, almost in inquiry. Will took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Of course Hannibal was there, waiting for him. That was the whole reason Will had driven over here like a mindless buffoon. He had instinctively known that Hannibal would be here, like he was linked to this man already, and it had taken over him and drew him here to Hannibal's side.

Will turned the engine off and stepped out of the car, Hannibal watching him the whole time. As if he blinked or turned his head away, Will would just up and disappear. Will locked the car and palmed his keys in his pocket as he headed into the building. When he got to the right floor, Hannibal was waiting for him with the door open in invitation.

This time, Will didn’t hesitate as he passed over the threshold of the office. Hannibal shut the door after him with a soft click and suddenly the space felt a whole lot smaller.

There were so many things he wanted to say to the man that his thoughts practically tripping over themselves that it all became a confusing jumble in his head.

Until finally the only word that left his mouth was, “Why?”

Hannibal had been watching him the whole time, silent, motionless, ever present. His voice was deep and bottomless as the ocean. “Why not?”

Will was unimpressed. "Do you really need me to answer that? It's murder, plain and simple. He should have been arrested and processed like all the other criminals and put in prison to serve his time."

Hannibal regarded Will calmly. "And when you and the police interviewed your killer to get his confession, did it feel like justice to you? Was he repentant and guilt ridden for all that he had done, to the lives lost and the families now torn apart?"

Will flushed with anger. "That's not the point. He can't hurt anyone else."

"You're right, that wasn't the point to what happened last night. At least, not the point I was trying to make."

Will sneered. "Then please enlighten me. I am all ears for why you simply watched as he almost strangled me to death."

He said too much, showed how vulnerable he was and he hated himself for it.

One moment Hannibal was on the other side of the room, the next he was right in front of Will with his warm hands on either side of his chilled face, tilting his head up and caging him in at the same time. It should have been intimidating, but it wasn't. It made Will feel small and safe, reassured and Will lent into it without thinking.

"You may not have much faith in yourself, but I do. I knew with total confidence that you would overpower him and save yourself."

"To kill him, you mean," Will murmured, drugged by the sheer warmth that radiated from the man. The incubus in Will stretched like a cat under his skin, revelling in the simple touch and close proximity of the Other.

"Yes," Hannibal replied, his fingers stroking the side of Will's face, along the edge of the gauze pad. "Though I admit, snapping his neck like that was rather novel."

Will drew back slightly to better look at him. "You wanted me to kill him by consuming him."

"You are incubus, Will. It's what you are."

"It's not all I am," Will said as he stiffly drew away from his hands.

Hannibal let him without putting up a fuss. "Nor can you ignore it either. You're killing yourself, Will. How can you not see that?"

Will snorted at that. "I think you're being rather dramatic, Doctor. Just because I don't glut myself doesn't mean I'm killing myself. We've been over this."

"Aren't you? You barely eat, constantly taking a little bit here and there where you risk exposing yourself by going into a feeding frenzy. You barely function in your capacity as an FBI profiler and when you do, you are starving afterwards. Am I wrong in any of what I have just said?”

The question was merely rhetorical. They both knew he was right, of course, Will can't look back at the supermarket episode without shame. Not that Will would admit it out loud. "I've been just fine before you came along." He said, grimacing at the petulant tone to his voice.

Hannibal moved closer. "You can lie to yourself, but don't lie to me. I can feel you, remember? Your hunger is like a heartbeat inside my own chest. The next time you lose control of yourself, you may not be so lucky in reigning it back in the worst way possible."

"There won't be a next time," Will ground out. "That was… an isolated case."

Hannibal's eyes were bottomless when Will locked at them. It felt like if Will stared into them long enough, he would fall right in. But something moved in those depths, shifting, stretching, and Will should feel afraid of it.

A normal human being with a healthy amount of self preservation *would* feel fear and escape from it. But instead it called to Will and Will felt himself respond in a way he had never responded to anyone before in his life.

And it made him so unbearably angry, that he was practically shaking out of his own skin. The rush of emotion made him flush with heat. A red mist had descended over his eyes and Will had no idea what possessed him in what he said next.

"You want to know what really happened in that parking lot? You're right, I was hungry and tired from reading the crime scene with Jack, but I've been that hungry before, it's nothing new. While I was in the checkout line, I saw a man that reminded me of you and suddenly, I had no self control. I had to have him and I did."

Will didn't get to regret his words for long as the moment he finished his bit off speech, Hannibal was once again up in his space with his hands resting on Will's shoulders, the heat of them seeping through the fabric of Will's shirt. Their faces were inches apart and Will ached with his whole being to close the gap between them and just *taste.*

“You didn’t need to go chasing after that man,” Hannibal murmured, possession thick in his voice. “Not when I would gladly offer myself to you.”

Will wished he was a stronger person, but he wasn’t. He wasn’t strong enough to say no a second time, with Hannibal so close and that *something* between them crackled with electricity.

It was always leading up to this.

Yet, still Will hesitated in taking that final step. “What you’re offering me…”

“I wouldn’t offer it if I truly didn’t want to, Will,” Hannibal said quietly. The sincerity in his voice and face was almost painful to contemplate. “You should not fear me. You should not fear this.”

“Fear you?” Will murmured. His hands, seemingly of their own volition, slid up Hannibal’s arms, skimming over his shoulders, to rest on either side of his face. “You’re the only one who knows me for who and what I am. Of course I should fear you.”

Hannibal leaned forward and Will met him halfway. Their lips brushed softly against each other once, twice, three times, before Hannibal groaned and opened his wider for Will to *take, take, take.* Will parted his lips, Hannibal mimicking the gesture and Will began to feed from him, drank deep of Hannibal’s energy and it was -

It was like nothing Will had ever tasted before. It was like drinking pure rays of sunshine, utterly intoxicating, and so very powerful. Will’s whole body lit up with it, his very atoms buzzing with the energy and Will couldn’t help himself as he drew Hannibal closer to him. He was practically on his tiptoes, his arms wrapped around the other man as he clung desperately. He moaned, soft and low.

Hannibal obliged him, his own arms tightening around Will’s waist in a casual possessive gesture that had Will’s animal nature purring with it. Hannibal answered him with a low growling sound of his own and he flicked his tongue out, touching Will’s own and it sent shockwaves through Will’s core.

Will's draw on Hannibal's energy slowed, he was becoming full with it for the first time in what felt like an age (since he hunted with his mother) and the feeding soon turned to more of a kiss. Hannibal coaxed Will's tongue to spar with his and Will returned the gesture, much to Hannibal's delight.

A lack of air started to become an issue and Will drew away reluctantly, not far as the arms around him didn't allow much room to get between them. It felt like weights were attached to his eyelids and Will had to fight to open them a bare inch. It was like he was riding the wave of the best drug.

Hannibal the human was no longer standing before him, Hannibal the Other stood in his place, breath fast and shaky, eyes big and blown. It seemed that Will had made him lose his composure once more.

Will reached up with shaking fingers, pressing them to the midnight texture of Hannibal's cheek. It was incredibly smooth, cooler to the touch than his human skin was, and Will wanted desperately to touch more of it. To run his hands down that body, to press the length of himself against it, to run his mouth along the lithe lines of him until that skin heated up to burning.

His thoughts must have passed between them as Hannibal's hold tightened to almost pain, their foreheads pressed against each other as they breathed each other in. Hannibal became Will's whole world.

"Come home with me, Will," Hannibal said, his once cultured voice now rough with want. " *Come home with me* ."

Without being told, Will knew that if he agreed to go home with Hannibal, there would be no going back to his life as it was now. For either of them.

To salvation or to ruin, that was the million dollar question.

But really, was there any other choice for the both of them?

“Yes,” Will said and felt the earth stood still with its echo.

VI

Chapter Notes

> I'm so sorry this took so long guys. I got completely stuck on the sex scene, it kept feeling cringey and, after multiple rewrites, I couldn't stand it anymore and had to post. I'm just not good at writing it so I hope it won't read too badly.
>
> Thank you so much for all the kind words and kudos, it really meant the world to me as I was out of the writing game for over a year. You are all awesome!

Hannibal’s residence was exactly what Will had pictured, it very much reflected its owner in its quiet finery and good taste. It was at least twice the size of Will’s own house, with patterned red brickwork and large south facing windows. The short gravel driveway was tidy and the garden on either side was immaculate. It reminded Will of old English country gardens with their closely cut green lawns and flower borders as a pop of colour.

Hannibal was silent as he led Will through the doorway into an open spacious hallway. The cream decor was a lot like the furnishings of his office: expensive and welcoming and it smelt clean with a tantalising wisp of Hannibal’s cologne. Will would normally balk at being in a house such as this, awkward and uncomfortable and can’t wait to leave, but something about it made Will feel at ease. Watchful, observant. It made Will want to stay.

There was a gentle brush at the small of his back, Hannibal’s hand steadying and encouraging him onwards to a living room, complete with a fireplace and soft looking cushioned sofas situated around it. He could still feel the link of Hannibal’s energy between them, thrumming contentedly, tantamount to a fine chain spanning what little space there was between them. Will wanted to pull on it, draw it deeper into him until he would never be without it. Without Hannibal.

Something must have shown on Will’s face as those eyes grew darker until they were all pupil and the hand at Will’s back tightened a fraction, possessive.

“Did you want something to drink?” Hannibal asked, his well bred manners kicking in on auto pilot, like Will was a regular guest to his home that he receives on any given day.

“I’m not here for a drink, Hannibal,” Will reminded him with a quirk of his lips. “Besides, you gave me what I needed at your office. Well, almost everything.”

Hannibal closed the distance between them, pausing only bare inches away. Will’s body trembled from his nearness, and Will’s lips ached to be kissed again.

Hannibal’s breath fanned across Will’s sensitive skin and the hairs on his neck rose in awareness. “Have you ever been with a man before?” He asked, his voice low and gravelly.

Will smiled sardonically. “I’m an incubus. What do you think?”

Hannibal studied him. “That’s not an answer either way.”

Will studied him back. There had been a man or two in the past. But he had learned early on that sex of any kind was incredibly dangerous for the other person involved if Will’s self control slipped at any point. He could and would kill them. The experience turned from pleasurable to fraught with anxiety and painful restraint. He avoided it at all costs, even if it meant he could never have an intimate relationship ever again. Anything was better than waking up to a dead lover beside you in bed, accusing lifeless eyes staring at you.

“A couple of times,” he answered truthfully. “But never…” He struggled to voice his thoughts.

But it didn't matter. Hannibal knew what he wouldn't voice aloud, he seemed to know everything about Will with just a look, breaking him open and peering inside of him, his secrets laid bare for Hannibal alone. There was nowhere to hide from that gaze.

"You don't have to hold back from me," Hannibal entreated softly. "Not anymore."

Will groaned breathily and grabbed for him, lips seeking Hannibal's own as Hannibal wrapped his arms around his waist, hands trailing to his hips. He kissed Will deeply before pulling back and nipping at Will's lower lip hard enough to draw blood, then plunging in again. The sting made Will's dick twitch in his jeans.

Hannibal went to his knees on the carpet in front of the fireplace, pulling Will down to straddle his lap. Gravity and Will's weight made them grind against each other, Will feeling Hannibal hot and hard against his ass, just as much as Will was. The knowledge that Hannibal wanted him just as much as Will did was a heady feeling and it made him cling desperately to Hannibal's broad shoulders. He arched his back, his hips rocking in circles against Hannibal in a forceful move and Hannibal's hands slipped to cup his ass, kneading the flesh and making the friction all the more exquisite.

Hannibal growled low in his throat, eyes dark and bottomless, as he clawed Will's coat off of his shoulders before attacking the buttons on the front of Will's shirt. His lips were like fire against the vulnerable skin of WIll's throat and Will tilted his head back to give the other man better access, eyes slipping shut.

The shirt finally came free and Hannibal took advantage of it by sliding his hand over the exposed skin of Will's abdomen and sides, every touch a brand on his flesh. Will soaked it all up like a sponge, feeling restless and desperate for what Hannibal could give him. He dragged his fingers through Hannibal's hair, before tugging on the ends so that Hannibal raised his face to meet his own.

“More,” Will rasped and his voice sounded alien to his own ears. He didn’t sound like himself anymore, he was like a creature driven by sensation.

Hannibal moved - and suddenly Will found himself flat on his back on the plush carpet with Hannibal above him, his hands and arms bracketing his head on either side. His pupils were blown wide and his kiss swollen lips were parted on panted breath. “As you wish,” he murmured, then bent his head to Will’s left nipple, closing his mouth over one nub and sucked.

Will keened, his back arching violently as his hands clawed at the carpet. The suction relented and Hannibal used his teeth to drag along the flesh and Will’s whole body lit up with pleasure.

Seemingly encouraged by Will’s response, Hannibal did the same to the other nipple before working his way down Will’s torso, kissing and licking over Will’s ribs to his stomach until he came to the waistband of Will’s trousers.

Will’s head came up from the carpet just in time to catch Hannibal brushing his palm against the tent of his groin, the slide of firm pressure making Will’s hips involuntarily twitch up in response as he mewled softly. Their eyes met as Hannibal repeated the movement, fingers brushing the head of Will’s cock with every upward slide. Will let his legs fall open in invitation, completely vulnerable to Hannibal’s attentions.

The submission made Will shudder, hips pushing up into the hand for more contact.

And Hannibal didn’t disappoint. His fingers deftly flicked the button open and he slid the zipper down, the sound obscene in the sudden silence that was only broken by their panted breaths.

His trousers and boxers were pulled down just low enough for Hannibal to grip him, bare skin to bare skin, and Will closed his eyes tightly and let out a low moan. That touch alone was almost his undoing. The grip tightened almost to the point of pain.

"Look at me," Hannibal ordered and WIll's eyes snapped open and he did as he was told. Hannibal was kneeling between Will's spread legs, head bent low, his hand wrapped around the base of Will's cock, the shaft red and glistening at the tip.

Without breaking eye contact, Hannibal lowered his head and flicked out his tongue against the head. Will gasped, his breath punched out of his lungs at the sensation. "Hannibal, don't tease me."

Hannibal's teeth flashed white in a smile before he relented. His mouth closed over the head of WIll's cock and he sucked. Hard. Stars exploded in front of Will's eyes and Will's power flowed to the surface of his skin. He felt it rush through him like a wave, spilling into the room and winding around Hannibal, clutching the other man to him.

Old habits die hard, and he panicked, trying to reel his otherness in, lock it inside himself before it could hurt Hannibal but Hannibal wouldn't let him. He let out a rumbling purr, the vibrations of it skittering along Will's cock, the suction pulling harder as he took Will in to the root and swallowed around him.

Will cried out, legs spreading further apart as he gave himself up to Hannibal and his hot mouth. His power spread out to permeate the room around them. He was close already, feeling his balls draw up tight and the pressure build at the base of his cock. Will's hands scrabbles at Hannibal's shoulders, trying to warn him as he was well past the point of coherent speech.

Hannibal managed to one of his hands back to the floor beside his hips, a clear signal to let it

happen. Hannibal's other hand splayed across Will's lower abdomen and he pressed down as he contained to bob his head up and down, sucking the whole time.

The feeling was electric and it pulled one of the most intense orgasms of WIll's life out of him. Will's body curved like a bow string and his mouth was open wide in a silent scream as pleasure rushed through him, all the while Hannibal never let up, swallowing him down like he wanted nothing better.

After the orgasm had worked out of his system, Will laid on the floor in a shivering boneless wreck, staring unseeing at the shifting shadows on the ceiling above him. He twitched as Hannibal cleaned him thoroughly with his tongue, the sensation very close to overstimulation, before he let Will's spent cock slip from his mouth. He crawled up the length of Will's body so he was hovering over him.

It was then that Will saw the desperate expression on his face as he clawed at the front of his own trousers to get them open and he took himself in hand, stroking fast and vicious. Will stared up at him, entranced. He was thick and long, the head a deep red as his hand passed over it.

Will wanted to return the favour, push Hannibal to the floor and wrapped his mouth around the length of him. Taste the skin on his tongue, suck him until Will had him groaning and trembling beneath his touch.

By the look on Hannibal's face, that would have to wait for another time in the not so distant future. He reached out and covered Hannibal's hand with his own, entwining their fingers together and tightening their grip to the point that Hannibal snarled and sped the rhythm up to a torturous pace. The muscles in Hannibal's stomach lock and stand out in stark relief as he came, his stroking never letting up. He striped Will's stomach and chest with white, some of it hitting Will's chin. It would have been distasteful, if Will didn't find it so hot.

Hannibal pulled their hands away, but didn't let go of Will's grip. He lowered his head again

and nuzzled his face along Will's hair line at his temple before pressing a chaste kiss to his cheek. His lips dragged along the sweaty skin until their lips met for an unhurried kiss. Will's heart rate kicked up at the intimacy of the action.

Hannibal pulled back just long enough to ask, "Would you come to bed with me?"

Will smiled. "Yes."

The sound of a mobile ringtone was loud and abrasive in the room and Will blinked his eyes open in the darkness, being awoken from a deep restful sleep he had fallen into.

For a moment he was disoriented, being in an unfamiliar bed, with little light coming from the heavy blackout curtains across the window. The covers around him were weighted and soft unlike his blankets at home and it was only until he felt the strong arm around his waist and the breath against the nape of his neck that it all came flooding back.

"Your phone is on the bedside table. I put it there, just in case," Hannibal said, sleep still thick in his voice.

Will shifted on his side to lean over to get his phone, but the arm didn't budge an inch, so he had to stretch an arm out to blindly pat for the phone. On the third attempt, his fingers connected with the smooth surface of his screen, and he was able to grab it.

Crawford's name flashed up and the low hum of contentment running through his muscles was fast disappearing and nerves set in. He picked up the call. "Jack."

"I hope I didn't call at a bad time." Jack said, and Will could never tell whether he was sincere or being sarcastic.

"What's the problem?" Will asked instead.

"I thought you would want to know that Michael Cole has been formally charged for the murders." Will waited in silence for the rest of it, the feeling of unease building as he was beginning to understand what the call was for. "And the Department has decided to formally not search for a fourth accomplice. There is no other evidence found in the house they were holed up in of anyone else and Micheal is adamant it was just the three of them that were in on it."

And his word means anything in light of recent events….

Will felt Hannibal shift next to him, turning to his side so he was watching Will. When in the gloom, Will can pick out Hannibal's features, soft from sleep, but watchful. Will didn't have to wonder if Hannibal could hear Crawford on the other end of the line.

"Will?" Crawford prompted.

"I'm here," he answered. "What do you want me to say?"

“I need to know if you are adamant there is a fourth killer out there somewhere, Will. If you tell me there is a fourth one, I’ll push them to keep searching. If you’re satisfied that they tied this case up, I can go home to my wife with piece of mind.”

Will knew Crawford was telling the truth, that he trusted Will over a whole police force telling him otherwise. Crawford would back Will up if need be, but he knew for a fact that the police force wouldn’t, especially not a freak like Will. Ultimately the decision didn’t rest with Crawford but with the Police Captain, so it was a moot point. Will knew what decision the man would make the moment Will started insisting they had got it wrong.

In the next few moments, a sense of calm settled over him and the words left his mouth before he really thought about them. “I can’t be entirely sure, Jack. Like the Captain said, there was no evidence of a fourth accomplice in their hideout.” The words wanted to stick in his throat. “I was wrong.”

Hannibal was watching him and his gaze visibly sharpened on Will’s face at those words.

There was a pause on the other end of the line. “Are you sure about this, Will?” Crawford finally asked.

Will nodded, though Crawford couldn’t see him. “I have to go with what the evidence say. There was no fourth killer.”

There was static over the line, like Crawford had let out a noisless sigh. “I won’t lie, it’s a relief to hear you say that. I never sleep well after a child murder case, and the thought of a fourth one out there, not apprehended…”

“Get some sleep Jack,” Will said, not breaking eye contact with Hannibal. “It sounds like you

need it."

"I will. Take care of yourself, Will. I mean it."

Will disconnected the call and let the phone dropped somewhere down on the bedside table behind him. His head was practically buzzing with adrenaline at what he had done. What had he done?

"I'm not letting the guy go," Will said into the ensuing silence, his eyes drifting up to the ceiling, mind already working over his next steps. "I don't trust the Police Captain to set his ego and prejudice against me aside and get the job done."

Hannibal reached out and laid his palm on Will's chest, right over his heart. "You wish to hunt him down, bring him to justice?"

Find him. Hunt him. There was a clear distinction between those words for Hannibal.

Will thought about it, really thought about it. He considered Micheal Cole and his complete lack of remorse over what he had done. He thought of the fourth killer getting away with everything he had done, going on to killing more children and recruiting more like to acts of depravity. He thought of the helplessness and the frustration and rage he had felt in that observation room over the situation.

Yes. Yes he did. And really, weren't they all just men and monsters in the end?

Will looked back at Hannibal, meeting those eyes without hesitation or flinching away from

the truth he found there. The truth he found inside himself. “He doesn’t deserve to live after what he has done.”

Will was rewarded with the most enigmatic smile yet. “I was hoping you would say that.”

“Does that mean you want to help me?” Will asked, though he already knew the answer.

“You don’t have to ask it of me, I would help you regardless,” Hannibal replied, and he threw back the covers and climbed out. Without another word he left the room, entirely unaffected that he was still naked. Will appreciated the view but wondered what he was up to. A minute later he returned with a piece of paper with his writing on. He sat next to Will’s side and handed him the note.

Will looked at it and realised it was a name and address he had never seen before. “Thomas Parker. What is this?”

“Your elusive fourth killer,” Hannibal returned, like it should be obvious.

Will stared down at it, completely stunned. “How?” he finally asked.

“It was by pure accident, really. When you were being seen by the paramedics, I went back to the house they were squatting in. I have an acute sense of smell and was able to pick up and differentiate their scents and applied it to my memory.”

Will stared at him. “And the police allowed you to wander around their crime scene unimpeded?

Hannibal's lips curled up at the corners. "I didn't ask for their permission and they never asked."

Of course. Hannibal had a certain presence about him that made those around him sit up and never think to question him. It was half the reason why Will was so fascinated by him.

Hannibal continued. "Your fourth killer had a scent that I recognised. A man by the name of Thomas Parker that had been a plumber that I had called to take a look at a burst pipe in my office building about a year ago."

Will blinked. "And you can still remember what he smelt like?"

Any other person would have shrugged their shoulders but Hannibal was too refined for that, even naked with his hair mussed from sleep and Will's hands. "As well as an acute sense of smell, I have a very good memory."

Clearly. Hannibal's mind would never cease to amaze him. "Being a plumber would mean he had access to his victim's property, scope out the layout without causing suspicion. It wouldn't surprise me if the families had something go wrong with their water, be it accidental or otherwise." Will mused aloud.

"Nor if he was the ringleader of the group, the brains of the operation," Hannibal agreed.

Will glanced down at the note in his hand, committing the address to memory. "And we have an address."

Hannibal’s smile lit up his face and Will wanted to kiss him all over again. “We have an address.”

Thomas Parker lived in a well built red brick three story detached house that was surrounded by well kept land. It had large fronted windows and the one on the ground floor, presumably the living room, was lit and cast long shadows on the garden grass. His nearest neighbours were of similar housing and a good two hundred yards away.

It seemed plumbing was a well paying trade, considering the sprawl of the house and the maserati that was parked outside in the driveway.

Will took it all in with the practised eye of a homicide investigator, noting the potential exit points and storing it away for future use. Hannibal stood next to him, a silent shadow, expectant. Will didn’t even have to turn his head to glean the other man’s expression, they were in perfect harmony with each other.

On silent feet, they got to the front door and rang the doorbell, the ring sounding deep in the depths of the house. After a pause, the door was unlocked and opened, the occupant standing there was a puzzled frown on his face.

Thomas Parker was a nondescript man in his mid thirties with thinning light brown hair cut short at the sides and longer on top. He was of similar height as Will, broader in the shoulder but going soft around the middle. He was dressed in worn black jogging bottoms that were fraying at the knees and a plain grey t shirt.

He looked like any other man you encounter everyday passing on the street, home from a day's work and relaxing in front of the television. The domestic normality of the picture he made was jarring to Will and he blinked at the man, forgetting to speak.

Thomas Parker 's eyes swept over Will and Hannibal, the frown deepening. "Can I help you gentleman?"

The gaze didn't linger on Hannibal, which Will took to mean he didn't recognise him from a year ago. Then again, not everyone had Hannibal's incredible memory recall, but it made Will breathe easier.

Will smiled beautifically, letting his incubus side rise to the surface and snare Thomas's gaze hook, line and sinker. "I certainly hope so," he said, sinking power into his voice, the tone deepening with it. "Won't you invite my friend and I into your wonderful home?"

Thomas Parker didn't stand a chance against Will.

Thomas stared at him avidly, opening the door wider for them with a flourish.

Will turned to look at Hannibal by his side. "After you," he murmured.

Hannibal smiled at him. Letting his fingers brush against Will's hand like a kiss, he entered Thomas Parker's home. Will followed him in and, waving Thomas away from the door, he shut and locked it with an audible click.

No trepidation crossed the killer's face, only naked adoration in his expression as he stared at Will. "How can I help you?" he asked again, this time far more accommodating.

"You're a hard man to track down, Mr Parker," Will said, dropping the smile and the lure at once. "Everyone is under the impression that you don't exist."

Thomas blinked slowly, like he was waking from a daze. "I-" Then came the anger. "Who the hell are you two? I don't know what this is about but you need to get the hell out of my house right now!"

"You invited us in," Hannibal returned mildly. "Seems rude to revoke your invitation so soon after the door has swung closed."

Thomas whirled on Hannibal, mouth open to presumably issue more snarling orders but he seemed to freeze at whatever he saw in that face. Hannibal hadn't changed his appearance, hadn't revealed himself to be Other in any way, but what Thomas Parker saw made him absolutely terrified of him.

A predator recognising another predator in the same room. A predator realising that he stood no chance against the other predator if it came to it.

"As to who we are," Will said in a conversational tone. "Well, I don't think that really matters in this situation, do you?"

"Whoever you think I am," Thomas said, his voice high and thin with fear. He was starting to sweat at the hairline, across the top lip. "Or whatever you think I have done, it's not true. I've done nothing wrong, I swear it on my life-"

Apt. “You, sir, are Thomas Parker, the fourth accomplice to the family murders in the news recently. You are an Accomplice, a kidnapper, a child killer.” They circled him. “A cannibal.”

Thomas’s face turned deathly pale. “I’m not, I - I would never-”

“Be quiet,” Hannibal said sharply and Thomas began to whimper. “You should face what you have done with dignity and your death without begging.”

At the word death, all sense seemed to leave Thomas entirely. He turned tail and ran deeper into the house. Will and Hannibal watched him go.

“Nothing more than a coward,” Hannibal murmured, turning back to face Will. His skin was darkening to pitch, those eyes reflecting unnaturally in the dim light of the house. “It would be a mercy to put him out of his misery.”

Will felt the answering call to the other man’s power deep inside him and, what felt like the first of soon to be many, he answered it. “Shall we?”

“Certainly.”

So began their hunt of Thomas Parker.

Will had wondered, when it came to the light of the next day and Will got a phone call from Jack, whether he would feel anything other than satisfaction at what he and Hannibal had done to Thomas Parker. Would regret creep in when he saw their macabre picture they had made of him. If he would feel the disgust that he saw in the faces of Katz, Zeller and Price as they surveyed the crime scene.

“Jesus,” Zeller whistled lowly. “Get a load at that.”

Whether Will would wish he could take it all back the moment he stepped foot back into that house.

None of these feelings happened. Instead, Will stood shoulder to shoulder with Jack and stared down, unflinchingly, at the body of Thomas Parker and felt nothing but an overwhelming sense of relief. Thomas Parker had thought he was a predator all those months he killed numerous children and their parents. But he was nothing more than a coward who preyed on the weak and the vulnerable.

He found that out last night, to the detriment of his life.

“The victim was Thomas Parker,” Jack said, not taking his eyes away from the prone body. “A self employed plumber with no employees. Unmarried and no relationship to speak of. No known children. Local police force have interviewed the neighbours and they say he kept to himself and didn’t cause any trouble.”

(Later, when the results of the background check come back on Thomas Parker, they found he had been previously convicted of being in possession of obscene pictures of minors.)

“Did they hear any of the commotion?” Will asked, already knowing the answer.

“Absolutely nothing,” Jack replied. “Both sets of neighbours are elderly and in desperate need of hearing aids. They had no idea what was going on in this house while they slept.”

“I don’t think we need Will to tell us this was a grudge kill,” Katz said as she snapped on her gloves. She pointed upwards. “I mean, there’s blood on the ceiling. That takes some strength and intent.”

“I think I found his arm,” Price said as he gazed at something behind the sofa, his lips pinched.

“Can one person do this to another?” Jack asked Will in a low voice, as if worried that saying it too loud would make it come true. “Or are we talking about another case of multiple killers?”

And now they come to the crux of the matter. Will had no intention of confessing to anything, but just how much was he willing to say to Jack for any leads on this case? Turning to Jack, he took stock of the dark circles under his eyes, the paler pallor to his skin. He was exhausted and telling Jack there were two, not one, killers he should be looking for might just break his will at this point.

“This was the doing of one killer,” Will said, turning away from those penetrating eyes. Lies are coming easier and easier to Will’s lips, but he still didn’t trust his tells to give himself away to that observant gaze. “A psychopath with a vigilante hero complex. He killed this man in the name of justice and an example.”

Jack raised his eyebrows. “An example?”

Will shrugged. “An example to anyone who wants to follow Thomas Parker in whatever crime he committed.”

“Am I to expect a string of bodies just like this one?”

Will smiled humorlessly. “You know psychopaths better than anyone, Jack. They are extremely hard to catch and they may never kill in the same way again.”

“God damn it,” Jack said under his breath. “If you’re not going to give me anything useful then get out of here.”

Will didn’t argue. He left without a second glance back and stepped out into the lukewarm sunshine of late morning. Parked in the driveway was Hannibal, leaning casually against the passenger side door and looking incredibly at ease with himself. Their eyes connected across the distance between them and Hannibal tilted his head imperceptibly.

Will started across the driveway, never breaking eye contact until he was before the other man, a little close to each other that was deemed appropriate.

Hannibal had watched him the whole time. “Everything alright?”

There was a whole world of meaning behind those words but it all boiled down to Will and

his well being. Will nodded. “A psychopathic killing, incredibly difficult to catch the killer.” He offered.

Hannibal's eyes traced over Will’s face and he felt it like Hannibal had reached out and ran his fingers across his skin. “Do you think this killer is likely to kill again?” He murmured.

Will didn’t have to consider it for long. “I imagine so, yes. It’s in his nature, after all.”

Hannibal leaned in, slow enough for Will to stop him, before he brushed his lips in a chaste tingling kiss that Will would feel for hours after. “I was thinking we could grab an early lunch now that you’re off duty. We did work up an appetite last night, after all.”

Will smiled. “I would like that.”

Hannibal stepped away from the car and opened the door for Will to slide into the seat. When the door shut after him, Hannibal walked around the car to his own seat in front of the steering wheel. “Do you have a preference for cuisine?”

Will leaned his head back against the headrest and closed his eyes. “No preference. You choose.”

The car started up, a soft rumbling of the engine in the seat beneath him. The inside of the car smelt overwhelmingly of Hannibal and his expensive cologne. Will breathed it in deep, let it fill his lungs, before he breathed out and let his own scent mingle with it.

Hannibal’s hand touched his knee briefly in acknowledgement, before he pulled out of park

and headed out of Thomas Parker's house and down the road.

"I'm glad you said that," Hannibal said, his voice warm. "I wanted to show you everything I can…"

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